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The Widow's Cow.

Page 214.

MARGARET GORDON,

OR

CAN I FORGIVE?

BY

MRS. S. A. MYERS,

AUTHOR OF

"POOR NICHOLAS" "GULF STREAM," "RAILROAD BOY," "MARGARET ASHTON,"
ETC., ETC.

"Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass, and shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noon-day."—PSALM xxxvii. 5, 6.

"Call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me."—PSALM l. 15.

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CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

PAGE

THE BLOTTED COPY-BOOK AND HOME TEACHING 7

CHAPTER II.

MARGARET'S HOME AND FAMILY 30

CHAPTER III.

GOD CARES FOR THE SPARROWS, AND PROVIDES FOR ALL..... 49

CHAPTER IV.

A FRIEND IN NEED IS A FRIEND INDEED 57

CHAPTER V.

A NEW LIFE AND NEW FRIENDS..... 69

CHAPTER VI.

THE REALITIES AND THE DISCIPLINE OF DUTY 78

CHAPTER VII.

THE YOUNG GARDENER, AND LIFE IN EARNEST..... 100

CHAPTER VIII.

PAGE
Difficult Duties and Dark Clouds..... 106

CHAPTER IX.

The Onward Path and Sad Changes..... 140

CHAPTER X.

Death in the Cottage..... 186

CHAPTER XI.

Squire Green and Brown Lizzie..... 196

CHAPTER XII.

Light and Shadow..... 218

CHAPTER XIII.

Margaret Leaves Home—All is not Gold that Glitters. 238

CHAPTER XIV.

Lessons of Patience—Peace and Power Obtained through Prayer..... 262

CHAPTER XV.

Better than Diamonds..... 299

CHAPTER XVI.

Mystery and Suspicion—Lesson of the Fire-fly..... 309

CHAPTER XVII.

PAGE

LESSON OF THE FIRE-FLY. THE PARTY AND THE "MAKE-BELIEVES." 320

CHAPTER XVIII.

HOME AGAIN, AND AN UNPLEASANT SURPRISE 358

CHAPTER XIX.

A ROUGH PATH AND A NEW TRIAL 389

CHAPTER XX.

THE LOST FLOWERS FOUND, AND A STRANGE DISCOVERY 400

CHAPTER XXI.

"WHAT IS MY DUTY? CAN I FORGIVE?" 437

CHAPTER XXII.

CONCLUSION 472

MARGARET GORDON.

CHAPTER I.

THE BLOTTED COPY-BOOK AND HOME TEACHING.

"BETTER suffer wrong than do wrong, Margaret," said James Gordon, addressing his daughter, a young girl of perhaps thirteen years old, who, seated on a low stool, was weeping bitterly. "I have no doubt that although you are now suffering severely from the effects of Kitty Green's malicious act, your feelings are less painful than hers, although she has achieved what she believes to be a triumph. You have indeed met with a great disappointment, but you must learn to regard it as a dispensation of Providence, intended as an exercise of faith and patience, and to be borne with meekness and submission. You, no doubt, like many others of your age, have looked forward to life as a time of unmixed happiness; but now that you have passed the period of child-

hood, the experience of every day will teach you that nobody can ever go smoothly through this life. None can escape the crosses and cares which are the lot of all; disappointments, like the present to yourself—unforeseen and seemingly undeserved—lie in wait even for the highly favoured; arising at first like little clouds, but increasing as we advance in the course of the discipline of life, they are intended by our kind heavenly Father to fit us for the battle that ends in conquest and the reward of an unfading crown."

"But, father, I did love Kitty Green, and I cannot yet hardly believe that she purposely threw the inkstand over my copy-book, although Mary Burton and Lizzie Brooks say they saw her do it; and they say, too, that you ought to turn her out of the school."

"Would that help the matter in any way, Margaret?" inquired her father. "It cannot undo what has been done, and would only make an enemy of Squire Green, who is the most influential trustee of the school. But how do you know that these girls are telling the truth? Would they be willing to come forward and openly repeat to the trustees what they said to you?"

"No, father, I do not think they would; they

begged me not to tell, for their fathers are tenants of Squire Green, and he is such a hard man. They both told me that Kitty Green had said she would be sure of the prize if it was not for me—that she had seen my copy-book and knew that I had the best chance. Oh, father, it is so hard, for my heart has been set upon getting the prize, and I have worked so hard;" and she broke out into a renewed fit of sobbing.

"Perhaps you set your heart too much upon it, and showed your copy-book in a spirit of vain-glory, and thus excited a bad spirit—namely, that of envy; and if so, you are punished."

"I'll never speak to her again," sobbed Margaret; "I helped her with her sums and other lessons all through the quarter, but I'll never have anything more to do with her. I cannot ever forgive her."

"You cannot forgive her, Margaret?" said her father. "Have you then read your Bible to so little purpose that you have forgotten that there is a passage which says, 'I *can* do all things through Christ, which strengtheneth me?' Or will you choose to be governed by what the world says, rather than by what God and our duty demand of us? Or does the command that we should love

and forgive our enemies appear too hard to be obeyed, when we remember that 'while we were yet enemies, Christ died for us?' This is your first sore experience of life's discipline, and only the beginning of the lessons all must learn. Life, Margaret, is something more than eating and sleeping, and is given for most important purposes; each moment is filled with responsibility, and burdened with results which shall determine whether we belong to the family of God or have chosen the world for our portion. We are told that 'man is born to trouble even as the sparks fly upward;' still, life is a privilege few are willing to relinquish, even amid the harshest discipline. Griefs and trials are the lot of all, and every trouble, whether met with early or late in life, is a dispensation for good, and is intended to raise us a step nearer heaven. All, however, do not take advantage of these steps alike; some recognize the trials as coming immediately from the hand of God, but others take but little note of them; and so it is that some make more progress in the Christian faith than others, who, while they admit trials to be the inheritance of man, do not recognize their true meaning. Is it not, therefore, better when called to receive such a trial as this, to seek

out its true meaning and turn it to our spiritual profit, than to indulge in a spirit of anger and say, 'I can never forgive?'"

"Father, Kitty knew why I was so anxious about a prize, for I had told her more than once, when she said how foolish it was in me to study so close in school when I had to work so hard at home. I could not at first believe she would do such a mean thing, and I will never trust her again."

"If she really threw the ink over your writing on purpose to spoil it, I admit it will be a hard task for you to trust her as formerly," said her father. "But there is one thing you can do, which is to forgive her for the wrong she has done you. There is a great deal of wrong to be met with every day in the world, which no one can set right; but there is also one thing which every one can do if they set about it in a proper way, which is prayerfully. That is, to endeavour to possess the spirit of Christ, and with all lowliness, meekness and long-suffering strive to follow the example of him who endured the contradiction of sinners against himself, returned good for evil, endured persecution in silence, and forgave his enemies even when suffering on the cross. You may think that I

have not spoken as kindly as you might wish, and that my words have savoured more of reproof than sympathy; but I have only spoken the truth, and should have done wrong to have soothed you into a belief that the injury done you was too great to be forgiven. The truth, Margaret, never does us harm; and when we want to forgive those who have injured us, the best way is not to try to persuade ourselves that wrong is not wrong, but, looking at the offence fairly, kneel before God and pray to him to give us a true understanding, and enable us to forgive, because we ourselves are sinners."

"Father, if it had been any one but Kitty, I could have borne it better. The girls say I will be mean if I ever have anything more to do with her. No—I *never* can forgive her or treat her as I have done, or help her as I was always ready to do;" and her tears, which she had partially dried, began to flow anew.

"I am sorry to see you so troubled, Margaret," said her father in a tone of kindness, "but I am more grieved to find you possessed of such an unforgiving spirit—a spirit which you must try to conquer, for it is not in accordance with the rules laid down by our Saviour. It is true that your provocation is very great, but is not our heavenly

Father provoked with us every day, and yet he pities and forgives, and bears with us, and kindly extends his loving-kindness even to the unthankful and the evil? Have you forgotten the petition of your daily prayer, or do you, in the presence of God, utter as words without meaning, '*Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us?*' And if you love the Saviour who gave you that prayer, and left such an example of meekness and gentleness, what is there that you cannot do for the sake of Him who has done so much for you?"

"I will try to do as you say, father," said Margaret, drying her tears; "but it will be a hard task, and, thinking of Kitty as I do, I do not know how to set about it."

"If you are sincere in your wish to do right, God will show you the right way. But while you are so bitterly charging Kitty Green with unfair dealing, do not forget that great watchfulness is necessary in regard to yourself. She has never been told how sinful such acts are, and therefore sinned partly in ignorance. You have been taught differently, and, denying self, you must go forth resolutely in the discharge of duty. And although your task may seem hard at first, it will gradually

become easy, for conscience will approve and a blessing will rest upon it, because it is undertaken with a purpose to do right. No matter what Kitty Green or others do, your business is to rule your own spirit, and not provoke others to wrath by resenting every offence that may arise, but rather seek to learn how to forbear, and *always be ready to forgive.* Be true, Margaret, always—true to yourself—true to God, and keep truly in the path of rectitude and duty; and then, my child, although you cannot escape the trouble that the malice or misrepresentations of the evil-minded may cause, you will still be enabled to enjoy that peace which none but the children of God can ever know. But it is now bed-time. I have had a busy day and am tired. Mary, bring the books and let us have prayers."

The books were brought; the hymn was sung; the portion of the Scripture read was the twenty-seventh Psalm, in which David sustains his faith by the power of God, by his love to the service of God and by prayer. Most earnest and impressive was the supplication that followed, in which, while the father commended his family to the protection and favour of God, he also entreated that they might be kept in the strait and narrow way—

the only way in which the Christian disciple is safe—and that earnestness of purpose, unfaltering exertion and constant watchfulness might be given them, by which they might be enabled to press forward vigorously "toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." The simple service ended, the good-night was said; but after the children had left the room, the door being left partly unclosed, Margaret heard her father, as leaning on his crutch he walked about the room, repeat to himself the sweet words of the Psalm he had just read: "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom then shall I be afraid?" and they fell upon her heart with a holy unction; and as she knelt beside her bed, the words so full of comfort to the sorrowing which she had just heard formed themselves into a prayer and blended sweetly with her usual nightly supplication: "Lord, be thou my light and salvation, then shall I not fear; be thou the strength of my life, then shall I not be afraid;" and with her heart much relieved of the weight which had oppressed it throughout the day, she felt as if a new spirit had been given her; and repeating again and again the prayer she had just uttered, she resolved that it should be her watchword through-

out life, and with this resolve, she fell into a sweet sleep, such as is the right of every Christian to enjoy, for "God giveth his beloved sleep."

Our last thoughts at night are not without their consequences, for often it seems as if our last thoughts before sleep are impressed with peculiar power. When we have closed our eyes after humble and earnest prayer, as we reopen them to the light of a new day, so does a consciousness of the favour, love and protection of God accompany our waking. So was it now with Margaret Gordon. The family service of the preceding evening had not been a mere form; her prayer had been uttered with a feeling of trust and childlike faith. God never despises or rejects petitions made in such a spirit; and Margaret, when she heard her mother's call to rise, did so with a new sense of energy and duty to begin the business of the day.

A hard task, indeed, was that which lay before her—the hardest trial which perhaps any one can know—namely, a battle with self; and deeply impressed with the words her father had quoted, "*I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth* me," she was, with the aid of assisting grace, determined to conquer. She must face the trial boldly; she must meet perhaps the derision of

some of her school-mates, who, because she would not resent the offence in a spirit dictated by the unsanctified heart, would call her cowardly and mean; but, what was harder, she must meet one whom she had loved as a friend; one who had so wantonly injured and wounded her, and whom she never again could trust, and she must meet her in a different spirit from that which her natural temper prompted. Pride, a deep sense of wrong, disappointed ambition, and a dread of scorn and ridicule, all rose up to hedge and forbid the path which had been pointed out as present duty.

All who have gone to school have experienced trials and hindrances caused by the jealousy or ill-feeling of others. But there are few who recognize how much greater an amount of heroism is requisite to know how "to suffer and be still" than to meet strife with strife and repay injury with angry words. Griefs and trials are all matters of comparison, and a child is often overwhelmed by the force of some circumstance which another would resent, perhaps, by a storm of invective, and then be satisfied by maintaining either a steady enmity or lurking spirit of hatred, which on proper occasion would manifest itself. Margaret Gordon was not one of these; her education had been conducted

by the gospel rules; she had some insight into the troubles incident to mortality, for childhood's path had not been to her strewn with flowers; this was her first real difficulty, exclusively her own, and required an effort which she had never before been called upon to make. Nevertheless, although painfully sensible of what it would cost to overcome self and pass over the injury in the spirit of Him who said that the offending brother should be forgiven, not "seven times only, but seventy times seven," she determined to act as her father advised, and thus achieve a victory, "compared with which," according to the Scripture rule, "the laurels of the warrior's wreath are weeds."

However, when the time for action came the following day, her heart lost something of its stoutness, and it was not without much anxiety and dread that she prepared to meet her treacherous friend, when she must practice the lesson which love and piety had inculcated, and her own heart told her was a right one.

"Oh, father," she said as she tied on her bonnet to go over to the school-room, "how can I meet Kitty in the way you advise? It will be so hard! How shall I ever accomplish such a task?"

"You have only to begin, and if you have

prayed in a proper spirit and asked for grace to enable you to do right, you have already begun," replied her father. "The purpose is the first step; readiness to perform that purpose is another—prayerfully and perseveringly going forward in the work, and doing the task which God has allotted you with all your heart. Do right; dare to do so in spite of your companions' remarks; let the duty which lies before you be the work of the *present* hour, and then wait patiently for the next; and be assured that no right effort ever proves useless, and will in time bring its own reward."

We need never tremble for those who lean upon God and then walk boldly forth, watching their own hearts and performing their duty with a vigour of purpose which springs from a consciousness of power derived from steadfast faith. Margaret Gordon went to perform her hard duty armed with the safeguard of prayer. It is affliction that oftenest teaches any one to *pray in earnest;* and whether her present sorrow was or was not a childish one, it had sunk deep in her heart, leaving a wound not soon to be healed; and now, in accordance with the Bible precepts by which her home education had been conducted, she set out resolutely to meet the first difficulty to be encountered in the service of

Christ—namely, self-denial; and armed with the true Christian armour, which is prayer, she conquered.

But we must now tell our young readers what was her present trial. No doubt they are all well acquainted with school difficulties, and know what severe griefs they often occasion. But can any lessons be learned from these? The experiences of life begin early; happy are they who, like Margaret Gordon, make use of them to subserve the purposes for which they are intended, and receive them as wholesome discipline from a loving Father.

James Gordon, her father, was the teacher of a flourishing country school in the neighbourhood of the large town of C——. Margaret was a girl of much more than ordinary capacity, and in no small degree ambitious; indeed ambition was her besetting sin. She wished to excel in everything she undertook, and, persevering and industrious, she spared no pains in the prosecution of her tasks. But she had, in addition to this natural temperament, another and a higher incentive; her father was a cripple in feeble health, her mother in nowise strong; she felt that it was her duty to aid, as soon and in whatever way she was able, in the general

support. She had for the last year been particularly industrious and studious, hoping to gain some of the prizes; thus with a reputation for being competent to teach she might, when a little older, help her father in the labours of the school.

She had, however, a formidable rival in one whom she loved and considered her best friend. Kitty Green was the daughter of a substantial farmer, who was a very rough and ignorant man, caring for nothing but money, and measuring every one according to his wealth. His wife was of a like spirit. From one brought up in such an atmosphere there was little to be expected. Kitty Green had never been taught to govern herself by Christian principle, or regulate her conduct by the rules laid down in the gospel. She had never been impressed with the important meaning embodied in the words spoken by the Saviour, "Do unto others as you would that they should do unto you," and was therefore unscrupulous in accomplishing her purposes, and cared little how much she injured others, so that she attained her end. She was quick at learning and ambitious to excel, but it was less from a love of acquiring knowledge than from a wish to be first in everything. She could not bear to see herself exceeded by any one,

and in this love of exaltation was willing to stoop to any artifice in order that all should think well of her. And yet she had some redeeming traits, for none are all evil; with a different home education she might have been a different character; left to follow her own will without restraint, every noble and worthy impulse of her nature could not fail to be perverted. Her parents were anxious that she should have an "edication," of which they were sensible enough to feel the want in themselves; but they were too ignorant to know that drilling in books is but the half of education; to instill into the mind those high moral principles which should be in every heart the rule of action was a task far above their comprehension.

Squire Green was the owner of a farm and distillery, and considered a rich man; James Gordon was only a poor country schoolmaster, but although not possessing much of what the world prizes, he was a happier man than his richer neighbour, for he looked forward to a better and more enduring substance in heaven, the "recompense of reward" promised to them who by faith and patience inherit the promises. The parents of the two girls thus different, it is not wonderful that their views of morality were totally unlike; Kitty was ap-

plauded at home for her smartness, but she had never been told of the sinfulness of the acted lie, the injury done by deception, or taught that it is a dangerous and sinful state of mind to love the praise of men more than the praise of God. Margaret was instructed to regulate her life by a higher standard—namely, the rule of the Christian life as laid down by the Christian Lawgiver: "Do unto others as ye would they should do unto you; forgive and ye shall be forgiven; love your enemies, and do good and lend, hoping for nothing again; bless them that curse you and pray for those who despitefully use you." Thus taught from infancy, there was a root of strength in her, which, carefully cherished, promised to bring forth fruit, even to sixty or an hundred-fold. She was too young to judge for herself in most things, but, led by her parents in the true way, she could pray, and she did pray in earnest, and in the sincerity of her childlike faith she experienced something of that enduring peace which is the inner life of a Christian. Kitty and Margaret were in the same classes at school, and their parents being near neighbours, the two girls were very intimate. Kitty was the quicker of the two; Margaret, the most studious and the better scholar. The handwriting

of both was particularly good, and Kitty had no competitor except Margaret.

Every one knows what examination-day is; a day seemingly formidable to pupils, is, at the same time, a day of expectation and delight. The pupils in the lower branches were examined first, and the writing-class made a capital show, for the table was covered with fine specimens of what the young scribblers could do. The room was to be arranged the evening before; Margaret assisted, but was obliged to go home at an earlier hour than the rest, and, never dreaming of evil, left her copy-book and "specimen" in her unlocked desk. Kitty Green was among those who remained, and saw where the unsuspicious owner had left her writing-book, and she was beset by a temptation to remove the only obstacle to her gaining the wished-for medal, and for which there was now a most favourable opportunity. It was getting dark before their work was finished, and only two besides herself remained; and, as she had no religious scruples and very little moral feeling, she yielded to the temptation.

"Maggie can get the prize for arithmetic, for which I have no chance," said she to herself. "The medal for writing is now within my reach: why should I not grasp it?" and believing that Mary Burton and

Lizzie Brooks were too busy to notice her, she advanced to Margaret's desk and overturned an ink-bottle which stood within it, so that not only the carefully-prepared work of the unsuspecting owner, but everything near it, was deluged with the black fluid. Nothing, however, was displaced, and the overturned ink-bottle was left to exhaust itself, so that the whole might seem the result of accident.

The act, however, had not passed unobserved by the two girls who remained, and when they found Margaret so greatly mortified and cast down on account of her lamentable failure, they told her what they had seen; and in the angry mood occasioned by the knowledge of the unfair advantage Kitty Green had taken, we have introduced the schoolmaster's daughter to our young friends.

Our readers, most of whom have experienced such hopes and fears as swayed the heart of Margaret Gordon on examination-day, may well imagine what she felt when she went to her desk and saw its condition. Her fine "specimen" writing, which she had so carefully prepared, was not only a "specimen" of her best writing, but was a piece of her own composition. She had tied the pages together very neatly with blue ribbon, and

ornamented the title-page with some artistical dashes and designs which she had copied from her father's books; and her blank dismay when she saw the shipwreck of all her hopes, only too clearly made plain by the condition of all the things within her desk, may better be imagined than described. The consequence was, that, discouraged and bewildered, she could scarcely answer a single question proposed; failure, to the astonishment of all—downright failure—was all she had to repay her for six months of hard study and painful application. Ah yes! so it seemed to her at the time, and so it seemed too to those who knew and loved her. But so in reality it was not. It was a lesson—such as all such lessons ought to be considered—of God's own teaching. The hardest lesson any one can learn is, perhaps, to bear and conquer sorrow, and believe that every dispensation is from God, who knows exactly what we need, and never sends the discipline of suffering except in love. Her grief at her total failure had been more on account of the hindrance it would cause to her plan of assisting her father in his increasing infirmities, when she had been exhibited in the presence of those she expected to serve as an example of stupidity. She would be looked upon as a blockhead,

and her alarmed fancy pictured the worst consequences. She went, therefore, to the school-house in a very humble mood, and subdued almost to heart-brokenness, until she heard from the excited party there what Kitty Green—one whom she had always loved and trusted—had done.

Margaret Gordon was a good girl, and, brought up as we have described, mature beyond her years, and prayerful and God-fearing, was careful to maintain a consistent walk. Grief arising from poverty and sorrow for her father's misfortune she had for a long time known, but nothing until now had occurred to awaken such vehement emotion or arouse the spirit of wrath that lay slumbering in her breast unsuspected by herself; and we are sorry to say that, encouraged by her companions, not one of whom tried to excuse the culprit or soothe the injured one, she, for the time, gave way completely to the spirit of anger, and declared that she would never, never forgive Kitty Green. In this stormy mood our young readers have first seen her; they are yet to see what grace can do, and how mighty is the change it effects. Her anger did not soon subside, and it was well that she did not meet Kitty Green until the scriptural teaching of her pious father, like oil upon the troubled waters, soothed her

into a better spirit and turned her anger into the channel of forgiveness.

She therefore, when she met Kitty Green, showed no resentment nor gave her any reason to suppose that she was cognizant of her baseness; yet it required a strong effort to conquer her natural self when she saw her wearing the red ribbon and shining medal which she and every one of her school-mates considered was justly hers. Whether any one reproached Kitty with unfair dealing, we cannot tell; but certain it is that she, from that time, tried in every way to avoid and sneer at Margaret, who, although perfectly aware of the change, never by word or deed seemed to notice it; the conduct of each thus proving the truth of the saying that "Those against whom our hearts harden most are not those who have wronged us, but those whom we have wronged."

We have taken up a whole chapter in explaining a childish difficulty and a childish sorrow, such as most have met and many will yet meet. It is a common thing to say in such cases to a troubled child, "What nonsense it is to cry about such a trifle! You will laugh at such things when you have real troubles to fret about, as you are sure to have by and by." This is the consolation most of

us have had administered in childhood, and we have repeated it to others since the time we left childish sorrows far behind. But we believe in the purifying influence even of childish sorrow, when it is impressed upon a child's heart, as it was on Margaret Gordon's, as a means of instruction now to profit by the discipline. Many, perhaps all, have these keen moments, and they do not pass without leaving a trace; we may not be able to recall their poignancy or weep over their recollection, as we did when the sorrow was present, or as we do now over the greater troubles which we have met in maturer life, but every one of them has left its trace "and lives in us still," and happy is it for those to whom, like Margaret Gordon, through grace the teaching has proved salutary.

CHAPTER II.

MARGARET'S HOME AND FAMILY.

JAMES GORDON, the father of Margaret, was the only son of a hard-working but intelligent and respectable stone-mason, who instead of foolishly indulging his children, endeavoured, from their earliest infancy to train them to the performance of such duties as belonged to the condition of life to which they were born. Industry and obedience he taught them from the first, but he made the former easy by kind encouragement of the task, or turned it into play by his assistance. "You set your children at work early," was a remark often made to him. "Do let them play while they are little, for the poor things will have it hard enough after a while, and childhood is so short." To which he would reply: "I should be sorry to oppress children, but I believe that education ought to be commenced in infancy. A child naturally begins to play without any teaching, and I am sure the plays my children find for themselves are harder and more toilsome than any task I ever

give them. I never drive them to work, or keep them at it too long, but endeavour to turn it into pastime. My children will have to earn their own living, and I am trying to fit them for it by giving them habits of industry and usefulness, which are often better than fortune; for habit is not easily laid aside, and the habits I am trying to teach them will always keep the possessor above want. Even a child of four years old can achieve something useful, instead of doing mischief, and besides, having a little work to do keeps children out of harm's way."

Not only, however, was James Gordon's training guided according to the rules of worldly prudence; the higher rules necessary to the education of heirs of immortality were inculcated in the most impressive manner, and made, as they ever ought to be, of paramount importance. Thus taught to look forward to life in a proper light, and regard time as a gift too precious to be trifled with or wasted, he was gradually fitted to fill, worthily, the condition to which the Unerring One had allotted him. Descended from a long line of Scottish ancestry, distinguished for piety, and suffering in the times of the persecution of the Covenanters, their example was often placed before him; and whilst

encouraged to learn all he could from books, he was often admonished to be careful to "maintain" the good name which belonged to the family and was their only boast. "See that you never do anything to disgrace your family; who, although poor, and most of them mechanics, as you will have to be, were yet considered worthy to hold high offices in the Church, and respected for their upright walk."

These admonitions sank to the bottom of the boy's heart; and whilst he was careful to regulate his conduct so as perfectly to satisfy his parents, he pursued such learning as came within his reach with avidity, and stored his mind with such knowledge as might prove useful to him in after life. His parents lived in the country, in the neighbourhood of several rich gentlemen, whose sons went to the same school, and as they often studied together, and James often helped them with their lessons, he became quite a favourite, and the intimacy which ensued was quite an advantage to him. They lent him books from their father's libraries, which he read in his leisure hours; travels, histories, and other useful works kept him fully employed, so that by the time he was fourteen, when he must begin an apprenticeship, he had treasured up a

mass of information the value of which he afterward found out. He was not strong enough to follow his father's trade, but chose to be a carpenter, and was accordingly apprenticed to a house-builder in the large town of N——, a worthy and exemplary man, who was careful of his boys; and soon finding out the integrity of his character, placed the highest confidence in him, and treated him as he would a son. When put in charge of anything, he was conscientiously careful to fulfil his trust; executed errands with despatch and faithfulness; nothing would tempt him to waste his master's time in his own gratification. These high moral qualifications were, however, not the best part of his character. Without ostentation, and in true sincerity, he was regular in the performance of all the religious duties the observance of which had been so early and so deeply inculcated, and in everything sought the blessing of God, without which neither success nor happiness can be realized. Great was the change to the country boy from the quiet ways of a rustic community to the more exciting scenes of town society. Temptations and evils, such as are never thought of in the country, are to be encountered, and none can pass through them unscathed unless fortified with

strong religious principles and possessing one invaluable moral quality—viz., decision. This he had in a high degree, as well as self-command, so that when laughed at, as he often was, by his fellow-apprentices for his country habits and puritanical notions, he took no notice of either their shouts or sneers. When he would tell of this treatment at home, his father would say:

"Never mind them. All you have to do is to be honest and steady: aim at excellence as every Christian ought to do in whatever may be your calling. To improve your talent, although it is but one, that you may faithfully and gratefully fulfil the trust which the great Master has given to every one to effectually perform his part in the great battle of life, is the spirit of Christ; but to improve that talent to outrun or eclipse others, or enrich or exalt ourselves, is the spirit of the world. Therefore never suffer yourself to be led away by persuasion or example, or dread of ridicule. You may never be anything more than a common workman, yet you may still be very happy, for happiness ever consists in the performance of duty.

"But remember, that in every calling you are charged with the solemn responsibility of adorning

the gospel; and therefore while diligent in business, you are not only bound to maintain strict integrity, but also so to walk before your worldly companions as becomes one who professes to be a follower of Christ."

These teachings were not without effect, or as water which spilled upon the ground cannot be gathered, but, carefully treasured and long remembered, were afterward used as household words when he had a family of his own. Years passed on, his parents died, and he was left without guardian or protector at an age most dangerous, and exposed to bad example and the temptations always to be found in large towns. He, however, remained steady, and in the evenings, when his fellow-apprentices sought amusement at theatres or bar-rooms, he read the books he obtained from the public libraries. Thus did this poor apprentice lay up a fund of knowledge, never dreaming what a mine of wealth it was to prove when he was called to fill a different place from the one he had anticipated.

We cannot trace his course through a series of seven years, but only say that at twenty-one he was master of his trade, but preferred to remain as a journeyman with his master, rather than to

set up for himself. In his boyish days he had often found pastime in fashioning rude pieces of sculpture in bone or wood; and afterward, when he had acquired some readiness with tools and skill in his trade, it occurred to him that in the evenings he might work a little at his wood-carving, and thus add something to his earnings. He became quite expert, and, with the profit he reaped and by economizing his wages, he had soon deposited a little fund in a bank to be ready, as he said, for a rainy day.

Alice Lee was the daughter of a deceased minister, who, broken down by the cares and anxieties of a straitened life, was at length overwhelmed by trial and disappointment and wearing poverty, which ended finally in a rest and peace never more to be disturbed.

The widow and her two daughters had to rehearse the old story; they had left their country home and come to town in search of employment. They lived on in their bereavement, sorrowful indeed, but taking comfort in each other and in the one specific for all ills—earnest, trustful prayer. The elder sister taught a little school, and the mother and Alice worked at plain sewing or embroidery, and were able to support themselves after a humble

fashion; but Lucy married and went to live in a distant city, and Alice was content to toil with patience and thankfulness so long as her mother remained to strengthen her hands, cheer her heart and bless her with her tender love. But soon the time came when the mother was no longer there—when the lips that had spoken words of holy love and fervent faith were closed for ever, and the young girl, orphaned and almost desolate, felt life a burden too heavy to be endured. But she was young, and life and energy are strong in youth, and the necessity for active exertion forced her to shake off her sorrow and find work to do; and she was glad to find that many of her mother's customers still gave her sewing enough to furnish scanty support.

James Gordon had for a long time been acquainted with the family, and in a short time after Mrs. Lee's death he took Alice to a new home as his wife. She proved indeed a helpmeet, for she still continued to work with her needle; both were frugal and industrious; prosperity smiled so brightly upon them for a time that James Gordon began to think of commencing business for himself. And, now that the current of their lives ran so smoothly, was there no danger that,

finding this world such a desirable home, they might make shipwreck of their faith in the quiet haven of domestic bliss? Perhaps they were unconsciously building too much on what they had already received, "practically forgetting, though theoretically remembering," that trouble is a part of the Christian's inheritance; the cross must in some form be borne, so that those who belong to the "little flock" to whom is promised the kingdom have in reality more cause to wonder when they are out of trouble than when they are in it. There was a time of sore trial appointed to James Gordon by Him who knows best what his children need, but who never sends more affliction than they can bear.

One day, when he was at work on a high building, the scaffold on which he stood broke, and he fell to the ground, half buried in the fragments that had fallen with him. These were soon removed, and he was carried home in a state of insensibility, from which it was thought he would never arouse. Yet after a long time he showed signs of amendment, but was found to be so much injured that he would never be able to resume his trade, but must remain a cripple for life. This was a great trial, but he knew where to look for

comfort amidst darkness and discouragement, and instead of yielding to despondency, with a faith undimmed by a single doubt he turned to the Friend whose presence he ever felt and in whose love he ever trusted; and in the peace which this confidence brought his sinking spirit reposed as "under the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." It was a dark dispensation by which he was thus tried, but it was the appointment of Infinite love; he could not fathom its meaning, but it could not be other than merciful; and in the sweet assurance that the same untiring watchfulness which had heretofore guided his earthly course would still accompany him, he enjoyed a foretaste of that peace which passeth all understanding. They had always lived in a comfortable home in a pleasant part of the town, but they gave it up now, and rented two rooms from a widow who lived in the suburbs, and tried to be not only contented, but happy in their altered lot. We have all been taught from early childhood to repeat daily those solemn words, "Thy will be done," but many who learn them say them over without taking in their meaning. James Gordon was not of this number; he felt and realized what the petition embodied in those four little words, "Thy *will be done*," meant, and, uttered in

the true spirit of supplication, made all the severe lessons of his after life comparatively easy.

The winter after his accident was a severe one; there was a money panic, provisions were scarce and dear, and little work to be had; the poor suffered often for the bare necessaries of life. Alice now proved her worth by her uncomplaining industry and strict economy. She was an excellent manager, and used every exertion to lessen the difficulties of their present condition; but with all the efforts of herself and Margaret, the eldest daughter, she had hard work "to make both ends meet"—a phrase full of sorrowful meaning, and understood by most. The family at this time consisted of the parents and three children—Margaret, then in her eleventh year; Robert, who was blind, having lost his sight in a fever; and "little Mary," as they called her, the pet of the family, and until now "good for nothing but to love and be loved by the rest." But the time had come when each one must do something, and aid in the general support. The father, as soon as he was able to sit up in bed, althongh his left hand was almost useless, began his wood-carving; the mother and Margaret were constantly sewing; and although Robert and Mary could not do very much, they were preparing

themselves to be useful. A basket-maker, a childless old man, who lived in the next house, took a great fancy to the blind boy, and taught him how to make rough baskets and other wickerwork. The widow in whose house they lived was a straw-plaiter, and as little Mary often did errands for her and assisted her with many kind turns, she showed her how to plait straw and gave her materials to work with. It was little that the younger children could do, but life is made up of little doings; and therefore children at a very early age may do something if they try, for it is not *what* is done, but *why* it is done, that is of consequence.

The peasants of Brittany call January "the white month," but this year it was very black to the Gordons. Winter may be a pleasant season to those who possess a competency, and this afflicted family had once found it so, but it was different now. The crippled father was not always able to work, nor could Alice get sewing enough to keep her constantly busy; and although "seam, gusset and band," and "stitch, stitch," are sadly tiresome, she would greatly have preferred the fatigue of too much labour to the forced idleness she was obliged to endure. Several applications had been made to

the little fund in the bank, and, as what was taken out was not replaced, they regarded its diminution with great anxiety. With prospects so dark, it would not have been wonderful if the family atmosphere had been one of sadness and repining. James Gordon, however, was not one to despond or doubt, for although, as was natural, he often contemplated the future with anxiety, his faith in the promises of a covenant-keeping God was too strong for him to distrust that "all things should work together for good." Trouble, sickness, sorrow and poverty, he was assured, were, even now, all operating for his advantage in God's own time and way, and in this beautiful and comforting belief he possessed a treasure greater than all the riches of the earth.

If Alice had had her golden dreams during the days of their prosperity—for mothers are apt to dream of their children's future, and those dreams are always bright—she never exhibited her disappointment in a change of temper or murmurs at their present lot; but borrowing sunshine from her husband's hoping spirit and armed with the same unhesitating faith, she too was willing to receive the allotments of a covenant-keeping God as the very best that could happen to them. And so they

were contented, nay happy, as all must be who put their trust in God. United in heart, all trying to do what they could, they acknowledged with deep thankfulness that if they had many privations, they also had many comforts, and to their many trials had corresponding blessings; and as a child in its grief hides its face in its mother's lap, so they found shelter from what might have proved an overwhelming sorrow under the shadow of God's love.

Martin Luther, speaking of his own faith, tells "somewhere of a little bird, which finding a sheltered place, goes to roost quietly, rocking itself to sleep without a care for to-morrow's lodgings, calmly holding by its little twig and leaving God to care for him." And so in this severe January weather and the succeeding wintry months, when everything was so hard to be got, Mr. Gordon thanked God for present mercies, and, trying to do all that he could, he, like Martin Luther's little bird, left all the rest to his heavenly Father. We have already said that he had a better education than most of his class, and now that his children could not go to school, he taught them himself and his lessons were instructive and elevating—travels, history, or the wonderful things found in

the kingdom of nature, through which he led them to think of the unspeakable goodness of God, who has given so much beauty to this sinful earth. But, above all, they were taught to read the Bible reverently, and reduce its lessons to daily practice. They were also induced to find illustrations of Christian truth in its pages, thus storing their minds with a wealth of Scripture knowledge, the value of which was afterward proved. In the escape of Lot and his family from Sodom was shown the danger of despising warning and unbelief; Jacob's well and the smitten rock of Meribah were not without significance, and a suggestive lesson was found in the history of the palm trees, which are so valuable in those Eastern lands.

Josephus tells that it was the custom "to hang heavy weights upon those trees, but as soon as these weights were removed, and often when they were not, the trees, spurning all restraint and hindrance, would again spring up heavenward." Thus, it has been said, "it is with the true Christian: although bending for a time under the heavy weight of affliction, he cannot be forced to grovel on the earth, but looks heavenward in spite of all opposition." Neither can the sapling palm be bent as most other plants may; and thus it is with young Chris-

tians who are firm in faith. If they are indeed trees of God's planting, he will care for them, and never suffer them to be moved while they trust in him. Margaret liked these instructions or conversations better than any amusement, and listened attentively, although she was too timid to say much in answer. She therefore listened silently, but, like Mary, she treasured the lessons in her heart, and the time came when she proved their value. The careful study of the Bible is itself an education; science sometimes bewilders and leads astray, but religion enlightens every mind, making wise unto salvation, and is the only safe chart to steer by in the rugged voyage of life. And it is wonderful how the texts and passages written in its beautiful language, and learned either as Sabbath lessons at home or at school in the happy days of youth, rise up in after life, in moments of darkness, of sorrow or temptation; how God's commands are remembered and serve as guides in circumstances of doubt and perplexity; and above all the sweet promises that "strength according to the day shall be given," and assurances of the love which never fails come to cheer and encourage in seasons when it seems that the troubles of earth are too great to be borne.

Brought up in such an atmosphere as we have just described, and surrounded by the salutary influences of judicious and pious training, Margaret learned early the true value of life, and the importance of the duties belonging to it; she was thoughtful beyond her years, grave at times, but never sad, for although fully aware of the weight of the present family trials, she shed sunshine over the domestic circle—the sunshine of a loving, cheerful and contented spirit. Her character was one which developed slowly, as is the case with all whose dispositions, like hers, are grafted upon candour and honesty of purpose. At the age of twelve the bud was scarcely more than formed, but within it was the perfect flower, and the germ could not fail to mature to perfection, because truth was the foundation on which her character was based. Eminently practical and essentially active and energetic, both in body and mind, she was yet the possessor of higher impulses; unpretending, unexcitable, almost to seeming passiveness, none could have imagined the intense earnestness as well as tenderness of spirit that lay within those hidden depths, nor the child-like conscientiousness which regulated her every action. Nevertheless she was not perfect—for who is?—and she sometimes gave way to sallies

of anger, as has been shown in our first chapter; and her feelings, when suddenly excited, as they had been on that occasion, would find vent in quick answers or angry resolutions, but they were always followed by bitter repentance. But faithfully admonished where her weakness lay, and having moral courage to see herself in a true light, and seeking the need of support from a better strength than her own, she knew where to go to seek for forgiveness for her shortcomings, or for patience and perseverance in the endeavour to conquer her faults—a task which her father told her was never accomplished without much trouble. She was often, too, reminded of the duty of self-examination; how necessary it is for every one who would live so as to please God; and although with the instability of childhood, she would yield to the promptings of a sinful heart, it was never without compunction. But she had heard, too, that the work of a Christian is the work of a whole life, and no one must despair because they are not perfect at once; that aid and support are promised and given in such a warfare; and that no one who asks help from Him who is mighty to save is ever cast out. The prospect and hope of heavenly aid is always the trust of the contrite spirit; and en-

couraged by the sweet assurance that there was a Friend in heaven who was ever ready to forgive, and have compassion on those whom he loved so well as to die for them, she went to him with all her fears and griefs; and most sincere was her prayer for conquest over self, and entreaty that all the work allotted her might be done with the "eye single" to the glory of God; and as no true suppliant is ever turned away from the throne of grace wholly comfortless, the asked-for aid was vouchsafed, and she at last gained the victory. To do right, and to regulate her life by the example of Him who taught, "If any one will come after me, let him take up his cross and follow me," was from this time her supreme endeavour. She spared no pains in the discharge of her daily duties; she did what faith and love prompted her to do, and in the discharge of their requirements found not only safety but happiness, for it was the service of God, which is perfect freedom. Her heart was filled with cheerfulness and hope, and she at length realized the truth of the Psalmist's words: "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee."

CHAPTER III.

GOD CARES FOR THE SPARROWS, AND PROVIDES FOR ALL.

THE winter, which always brings sufferings and privations to the poor, was in 18— unusually severe. But the months of snow and bitter cold had passed away, and March, with its wild and blustering winds, was advancing toward its end, but no change had taken place in the circumstances of the Gordons. Provisions were still high and work scarce as ever, and it is not to be wondered at if, although still strong in the faith of heavenly protection, James Gordon's deep anxiety should at times have been apparent in the increased seriousness of his whole demeanor. Margaret noticed how gray her father had grown—how worn and aged both he and her mother looked; and, seized with an impatient restlessness to do something to aid the family resources, she began to plan what that something should be.

"I could go out as a nurse or a chambermaid if I was a little older; to be sure, the folks we used to know when we lived up street would think it

was a terrible come-down; I should not, however, care much for that, for father always says that it is God who appoints our condition, and we ought never to murmur, for that all things shall work together for good. But I must say I wish we were not so poor; before father got that dreadful fall, we had everything as nice as other folks, but now, when I meet the Blakes and the Thomsons, as I often do when I am carrying home work up town, they pass as if they had never known me."

With such soliloquies, in spite of her confidence in her father's teachings, there would come upon her a bitter sense of the inequalities of life, and it would sometimes seem as if Heaven was unjust in giving so much to some, to others nothing. But her spirit would not thus rebel long. The faith which had been handed down from her Scotch ancestors, much of which she could not understand, had, as one has said of the Calvinistic belief, "much sweetness at the root." For it is a faith which teaches the peace of resting, child-like, beneath the shadow of that Omnipotent will which holds every tangled thread of life within one mighty Hand—which rules all things, and rules them continually for good.

One day, as Margaret was returning from an

errand up town, she met a party of young girls, gayly dressed and talking in loud and boisterous tones. It was plain that they had not the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is of great price in the sight of God. As she came near to them, she perceived they were her former acquaintances, and, glad to see them, she was about to accost them, when, after giving her a rude stare, they turned abruptly away. A feeling of indignation, which was not lessened by the laugh which met her ear after they passed, flashed over her; her sensitive feelings were touched to the quick, and her natural high temper aroused in its fullest force. But her anger could not last long, for she had begun to walk patiently in that path which is lit by a holy light and leads to rest; and although sometimes she faltered and yielded to the sway of her natural irritability and easily-excited temper, she was under the influence of one Power which was always able to stay such outbursts of feeling as were aroused on this occasion. Her anger soon gave place to softer emotions, and although wounded and disappointed, as the tears that dropped on her faded calico sleeve plainly attested, she was able to reason calmly with herself: "Am I not wrong to be angry? Mary Blake and the

rest of these girls may look down upon me if they choose, for I suppose that, as their fathers have grown richer and mine has become poorer, we are now in different positions, and I must be content to bear with the circumstances which will arise out of this difference. Father said once, when I told him how badly some of the girls had behaved to me, 'Never think of slights for a moment unless they are caused by your own misconduct. It is no matter what people say or think of us, provided we act our parts well.' And he said, too, 'that it was not for pleasant things only that we live; it is to do with all our might that which is set before us to do, for our heavenly Father gave us the work.'"

These reflections calmed her aroused spirit so far that the incident did not materially depress her, and she felt that she could forgive it. But it was not so easy to forget, and the remembrance of it haunted her for many days. Those girls had once been her companions; they had played together and sat side by side at school, but they were children then, and had not learned the distinctions which wealth makes, even in those of the same class.

Have any of our young readers ever passed through a similar ordeal? Most likely they have, and may

yet remember the pang it caused. We hear constant lamentations over the trials and difficulties of life; but, after all, does not half of the unhappiness of life grow out of jealousies, slights and envyings which a resolute attention to the work which is allotted us (and everybody has a work to do, whether he thinks so or not) would "put to flight and spread a blue sky over the heart?" The Gordons could not be unhappy long; no matter what the toils of the day had been, the evenings were always pleasantly spent, for it was impossible to be dull in the presence of the father, even crippled and suffering as he now was. He was not only a man of strong faith, but also of a peculiarly bright and happy spirit, looking always on the best side of everything, and "the sunshine within" that illumined his own loving heart communicated its cheering influenee to his little circle, even when their prospects were darkest, and made them forget that they were poor. If what Dr. Johnson says is true, that "the habit of looking at the bright side of everything is worth a thousand a year," then James Gordon was by no means a poor man, although searcely able at this time to obtain daily bread. Contentment with godliness is great gain, and this it was his privilege to enjoy. Margaret,

as we have said, had her feelings rudely touched by the occurrence of the morning, but such was the tranquillizing influence diffused by the atmosphere of home that before the evening was over her cheerfulness was restored, and she told the treatment she had met with.

"You must not suffer yourself to be discomposed by trifles, Margaret," said her father. "You will have to learn that wealth, in the estimation of the world, elevates its possessor above those who are really their superiors, but are looked down upon because they are not rich. Most persons would consider the incident of to-day as very trifling; and so it is, scarcely deserving a thought, for we ought never to think of slights except they are caused by our own misconduct. However, trifles are not always trivial, and sometimes prove a greater trial than things of more importance; and you must remember that we are not sent into the world to meet with pleasant things only; it is our duty to do with all our might the work our heavenly Father has given us, and doing this with 'an eye single,' it is no matter what people say or think, provided we are assured of our own motives, for who can harm us if we follow after that which is good? These little trials are the tests of what

we are, rather than greater ones, for they find us unprepared, and it is of less consequence what the work we do is than the manner in which it is done. Besides, those little trials do us good instead of harm, for they bestow a kind of moral hardihood most important for the emergencies of life, and must be acquired in the season and through the incidents of youth, growing with the growth and strengthening with the strength, to fit us for the battle which is 'to bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.' And now, I trust you will not allow yourself to be unhappy because our present circumstances separate you from those who were once your companions; and I am sure you will not, when you remember that it is God who has willed your present lot, and given you a work to do—the work of self-discipline—requiring great energy and watchfulness, without which nothing can be done. *Work for some good, be it ever so lowly,* but let it be done with a stout heart and resolute will—work that shall turn to account in the stern reckoning of the long day of life—work for Him to whom nothing is great, and therefore nothing can be little."

Margaret listened attentively, for she was deeply impressed by her father's words, and resolved to

do her allotted work in a right spirit. But the wound she had received did not readily heal; she had many conflicts with her own proud spirit, and she began to think that the strait and narrow way of which our Saviour spoke, as the only safe way in which a Christian could walk, was strait and narrow indeed, and hard to be kept. She had heard her father speak much of the duty of forgiveness, and say that although there are some in the world whom we cannot love but for Christ's sake, there are duties we owe to them, as being children of one great family, which cannot be set aside. The performance of those duties is often hard, but what cannot we do for His sake who died for us, even when we were yet enemies? "Since father says so, it must be right, and I will try to feel most kindly toward those girls," was her conclusion after the conversation ended, and kneeling by her bedside she covered her face with her hands, and prayed not only that a meek and forgiving spirit might be granted her, but that she might be fitted for a patient endurance of trial, and be made stronger and better thereby; and when she laid her head upon her pillow, she felt her heart penetrated with that deep love and trust which earnest, fervent prayer is sure to bestow.

CHAPTER IV.

A FRIEND IN NEED IS A FRIEND INDEED.

THE following morning ushered in a wild March day; the bleak wind that blustered and grumbled round the house roared also angrily down the wide chimney, where a scanty wood-fire was burning, as if bent on resisting the genial ascent of the flame that resolutely made its way upward, and endeavoured to dispense warmth and a cheerful glow over the humble room of the Gordons. Showers of sleet and snow drove past the windows at intervals, and kept up a noisy pelting on the panes, as if demanding admittance to the scant fireside. It was a day on which few would venture out, and as few ever called upon this reduced family, even in good weather and on business, no visitor could be expected on such a day as this. And yet a visitor, a good Samaritan possessing the spirit of the Master he professed to serve, found his way there amid the pitiless peltings of the storm, admitting no hindrance in the prosecution of the duties belonging to his high

calling. Mrs. Gordon and Margaret were busy on the work brought the evening before, Mary at her usual task of plaiting straw, and Robert, seated on the floor, pursued his basket-making, and kept up the fire with the refuse of his work. The father of the family was not given to self-indulgence, and although much crippled and for ever incapable of active labour, had also his employment. We have already spoken of his skill as a wood carver, and his success in making heads for umbrellas, canes, etc. He had, as he lay disabled on his bed, projected a set of chess-men, which should supersede the uninteresting figures in general use, and give a martial air to a purely military game. The effort, although at first painful, did him good and beguiled many hours of pain. He worked diligently, animated by the hope which whispered, through silent toil, that if it did not sell in his lifetime, it would bring something to Alice and the children when he was dead. But, contrary to all expectation, he had recovered so far as to be able to leave his bed and go about the house on crutches. His work latterly had therefore progressed more rapidly, and on this wild March day he finished the task which had relieved the tedium of many weeks. The work, though long and often interrupted by severe

attacks of pain, had to him been full of interest, and he began to view the little warriors, which represented the Christian and Saracen armies at the time of the Crusades, as they grew into shape under his maimed but still skillful fingers, with feelings almost of affection.

"Alice," he said, as he placed the last completed piece in his wife's hand—it was in a tone of regretful sadness that the task which had solaced so many weary and painful hours was brought to a perfect end—"what do you think of my work, and do you believe that they will sell?"

"The work is beautiful," she replied with real delight, as she contemplated the mail-clad king and brushed away some tears; "but as to selling, I do not know. Perhaps their novelty may be in their favour; folks always grasp at something new. I hope, however, they will find favour; if they do not, I fear that we shall have harder times than ever; but we must continue to trust our heavenly Father. When Mrs. Murray sent this work I am sewing on, she told Margaret it was the last we could have from her for some time, as she was going abroad to stay for a whole year. I feel altogether discouraged; she has been my best customer, and now that her work is withdrawn, if I cannot get

the same employment from others, I do not know what we shall do."

James Gordon did not at once reply; but if any rebellious thought or feeling of distrust arose in his heart at the dark prospect which the failing to get employment would bring, it was only for a moment. The same sweet faith which he had been able to exercise in hours of helplessness and pain came to his aid; the transient cloud passed from his brow; his countenance was as bright as it ever had been in his prosperous days, when he looked up into his wife's tearful face and prepared to answer:

"We can trust, Alice, as we have always done, God knows his own purposes, and it is enough for us to be assured that all our trials are of his appointing, and believe that whatever his allotments may be, he will do what is wisest and best for us. Our way at present seems dark, but often help is sent by what seems the most unlikely means; the hearts of all are in his hand, and being able to turn them as the rivers of water are turned, he often suggests to do something for the needy. The life of every Christian abounds with gracious providences, and there are few who cannot recall seasons when light is made to spring up out of darkness. Do not despond, Alice; we shall not be forsaken.

God is ever faithful to his promise, and he will not fail to send whatever he sees is needful for our good."

He folded his hands reverently as he finished speaking, and looking upward said, "Lord, thou art good and delightest thyself in doing good. Increase our faith, for whom have we to trust in but thyself?"

Alice did not speak; her tears were flowing, but her heart responded to the prayer.

"Mother," said Margaret, after a short silence, "I forgot to tell you that I met Mrs. Chester yesterday, and she said she had some work for us, which she would send in a day or two."

"Mrs. Chester!" said Alice, brightening up; "ah, yes, she is rich and liberal; perhaps she would like—"

She was interrupted by a knock at the front door. Margaret ran to open it, and their visitor, to their surprise, was no other than Mr. Berkley, their pastor, who soon explained the business which brought him out on such an inclement day. He had been at some distance in the country, for the purpose of assisting a brother clergyman who was out of health, and having to remain some days, had met several of the most influential men of the con-

gregation, who had inquired if he knew any one who was competent to take charge of a school. Old Mr. Jarvis, who had been the teacher there for many years, had died lately, and they wished his place filled as soon as possible. There had been many applicants, but they wanted one who, in addition to being able to teach the common branches of education, was steady and pious—which Mr. Jarvis was not—and would take an interest in their Sabbath-school and the affairs of the church. There had been a general awakening a short time previous in the little community, and they were anxious that the good impression made upon the young people should not be lost, as it is the Sabbath-school which adds mainly to the increase of the church. "I thought at once of you," said Mr. Berkley, "but feared you might have too much difficulty in the distance you would have to go. But that objection was soon removed. The schoolmaster's widow was anxious to rent the cottage, and it was so near both to the church and schoolhouse that the walk could not be very fatiguing, even to a person on crutches. The salary is good, the community respectable—none very rich, but all substantial; there will be no trouble about payment. I told them of Robert and Mary's occupa-

tions, as well as Mrs. Gordon's, and heard in reply that they would find no want of employment. A good seamstress was sure to be kept busy by the farmers' wives, who preferred to attend to their households and give out their sewing."

For a moment or two James Gordon was unable to speak. His heart was filled with gratitude to his heavenly Father for the unexpected providence which had opened this new path; the situation offered was a humble one, but with the salary certain, his family, aided by such work as they were prepared to perform, could in the country live in more comfort than they had done since his misfortune. At length he found words to express his thanks to his good pastor, and said that he would be glad to secure the place at once; it seemed the very best thing that could have happened him, and was doubtless sent in answer to his prayers. Light had indeed sprung up out of darkness; his faith had not been in vain.

"But why," he added, "did you venture out on such a day as this? It was risking your health."

"I did not wish to put off coming, as there were so many applicants for the place," was the reply; "and besides, I believed I was doing my Master's work in making this offer known to you, being as-

sured that if you felt yourself able to accept it, you would be relieved at once from the heavy burden resting on you from your present difficulties."

The comforting visit ended, the pastoral prayer uttered and the benediction pronounced, Mr. Berkley departed, once more to face the rude wind, but it was with a delight in his heart and peace of conscience which angels would approve and princes might envy. The wintry storm which he had braved in order to carry comfort to the destitute and sorrowing was not abated, but it was unheeded in the solemn but pleasant thoughts that filled his heart as he pursued his way homeward. It would have been hard to tell which was the happiest—himself or those to whom he had borne such cheering in their adversity. Most likely himself, for all who work for God find great reward in his service, and he found it too in the thrilling sense of happiness he experienced as he recalled the words of our blessed Saviour: "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these, ye have done it unto me."

There was joy too in the home of the Gordons. With thankful hearts they tried to realize the events of the day, which seemed more like a dream

than reality. The evening came and the table was set with their usual fare, a large loaf of brown bread, a smaller one of white and a very little butter, with milk and water instead of tea. But the frugal meal was arranged with a regard to neatness which rendered its scantiness less apparent, and the grateful happiness with which their hearts were filled turned it, as they partook of it, into a feast.

"And now, Alice," said James Gordon, "I think we need never again doubt the goodness of God. See how unexpectedly a new way has been opened for us by that same guiding Hand which not only directs in the great and leading events of our individual concerns, but also in the common affairs of every-day life. Nothing is too great or too insignificant for him to notice, and the affairs of him whom he has called to rule a kingdom, or those whose lot it is to pick up stones out of the road, are of equal moment in his sight. Ought we not, therefore, to be able to trust him for the future?"

"I do not think I ever doubted," said Alice, "but with you so disabled, little work for me and the price of living so high, everything seemed so dark that I could not help being very anxious

lest we should have to part with Margaret and Mary. But this unexpected proposal of going to the country—it all seems like a dream, our prospects are so changed since morning."

"That they are so ought to teach us never to despond," said her husband. "And why should we? Are not the hairs of our head numbered, and is it not pleasant to know that He to whom all the riches of the earth belong cares for us, and will always give us what he sees will be good for us. All we need to make us happy is faith. Firm trust in God, faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, can alone bear us up amidst the waves and billows of this troublesome world, but having this there is really nothing to fear."

The children, who had once made a visit of a day or two to a farmer's wife, were delighted to hear that they were going to live in the country. Robert and Mary were in a perfect ecstasy when they were told that they could have a cow and pigs, and a garden where they might raise all kinds of vegetables. "And chickens, father?" asked Mary; "can't I have chickens, and then I can sell ever so many eggs?"

"Yes, Mary, you can have as many chickens as you please," was the reply; "but if mother has the

cow and gives the pigs to Robert, what is left for Margaret?"

Margaret, the mature, practical Margaret, was less demonstrative than the others, although the most active and most to be depended upon. She therefore said, quietly, that she should like to have a plot of ground where she could raise flowers, of which she was passionately fond.

"You will then have no need to make paper flowers," said her father, langhingly, "for I think we will give you the whole garden for your share of the work."

Much conversation of a pleasant and cheerful kind filled up the remainder of the evening, but we need not detail it. The wind and sleet continued to beat against the humble dwelling, but the cheerful radiance and warmth imparted by the firelight, as it flung their shadows on the wall while it brightened their faces, seeming to reflect the cheerfulness of their hearts, caused the raging winter without to be unheeded, and banished their late gloomy guest—Care. Renewed Hope lent her renovating influence, and in the anticipation of the new life upon which they were soon to enter some of them no doubt had golden dreams. They continued to talk cheerfully and hopefully until the

usual hour for rest came; then joining their voices together, made the walls of their humble room echo with sweet melody as they sang the beautiful hymn,

"While Thee I seek, protecting power,
Be my vain wishes stilled," etc.

When it was finished they all knelt while the crippled father offered, in the fulness of his gratitude, a heartfelt thanksgiving to God for the mercies vouchsafed on this day, as well as for the loving-kindness which had been bestowed upon his whole life; he also entreated that God would bestow a clean heart and renew a right spirit within those of his family who had not yet felt their need of a Saviour, and, that making it the chief endeavour of their whole lives to love and serve him, they might find "the pearl of great price," in exchange for which the wealth of the Indies is worthless.

CHAPTER V.

A NEW LIFE AND NEW FRIENDS.

IT has been said that happiness is the best medicine, and its truth seemed to be verified in the case of James Gordon, whose health improved so greatly after the prospect of brighter days had opened upon him as almost to seem miraculous. Everything was soon in readiness for the removal. Mrs. Chester's work was finished, and the pieces of wood-carving sold. But although pleased with the prospect of the new life before them, when the time came for leaving the old house, where they had at least found peace, if not joy, their glad anticipations could not prevent their feeling much regret at parting with their old landlady and the basket-maker, who had proved sincere friends in their adversity. But the young love change, and the novelty of the journey to the children soon banished all their sadness. Their goods were piled up in a farmer's wagon—for it was before the time of railroads—with a space left in front for

Alice and the children, and James Gordon rode on one of the horses. Mary and Robert were wild with delight when they found themselves perched upon the top of the beds; Mary thoughtlessly pointing out objects for Robert to look at, not recollecting that he could not see, until he would answer in a tone something like one of sadness:

"Ah, Mary, I feel the air, as it blows around my head, very pleasant, but as to the houses and fields and people, you forget that I cannot see them. But I am very happy for all."

Margaret, less demonstrative, was, however, not less delighted; perhaps in the deep and quiet earnestness of her character she was more so. Although not yet a decided Christian, a strong religious feeling permeated her whole being, and her enjoyment was of too high a nature to be expressed by words. She had never but once before been in the country, and as she rode along, the beautiful surroundings awoke a strong feeling of devotion, as it was well calculated to do, for was not all the work of God's creative hand? It was a bright morning, brilliant in beauty, warm and genial; there were sweet sounds of the songs of birds to be heard, the lowing of the browsing cattle, the murmurs of the soft spring breeze as it whis-

pered through the branches, and the voices of merry children, who were playing at the roadside, enjoying the luxury of busy idleness. All spoke of hope, energy and a loving, working obedience to an almighty Will; and touched by the holy influence of all around her, it was not strange that feelings never before experienced by her—feelings responsive to the teaching of nature—rose up in her heart. And hers was a heart to rejoice in loving trust upon God, who was so good, and full of a humble devotion, which made her willing in all things to do the will of Him who by this last providence had shown that those who trust in him are never forsaken, but who, ever caring for his children, orders every event of their lives, and overrules for good even those that seem the most untoward.

It was sunset when they came in sight of their new home—a cottage standing a little way back from the road, in the middle of a lot of some extent. Its appearance was by no means inviting, but now, when they were all hungry and tired, the prospect of rest was cheering, and they hailed it with a shout of joy. It looked somewhat bare and lonely; work from the hand of industry was nowhere visible; the garden-pales were broken down; no climbing rose bush or creeping vine had been trained to

cover the weather-stained walls and with their clustering flowers shed radiance and perfume. Its only ornament was a large pear tree, which, standing alone at one corner, spread its long branches over the low roof, as if to protect it from the too rapid decay caused by neglect. Yet, notwithstanding the want of thrift and taste apparent everywhere, it was not unlovely, for the natural scenery around it was beautiful enough to atone for all defects. Broad meadows lay on the right; on the left, at some distance, rose a steep bank, at the foot of which was a road leading to the large town of C——, whilst far back in the rear and dimly seen in the distance the horizon was bounded by a range of hills, which seemed to enclose the whole like the framework of a picture. The view was very lovely in the mellow evening light, and although the trees were yet unleaved, the fields were clothed with the freshest green, and the grass and low shrubs which were the earliest to bloom sparkled in the glancing rays of the setting sun, and the soft evening wind, as it swept by, made music in cadences peculiarly its own. Yet you could not call it solitary, although no buildings were near except the quaint, old-fashioned house of their nearest neighbour, John Brown, which, with its stone

chimneys and broad, open porch, stood half hidden by some large trees just across the lane which divided it from the little homestead now to be occupied by the Gordons. But, although seemingly shut out, they were near enough for the sounds always attendant on farm-life to be heard. The carter-boy's whistle, the clatter of milk-pails, as the dairymaid proceeded in her task, and occasionally the neighing of a horse or the lowing of a cow, told of employment and bustle. But they were all hushed now, softened by that indescribable atmosphere of quietness which prepares the gentle evening for the deeper solemnity of night, and now touched the heart of Margaret Gordon with a feeling of seriousness never experienced before.

As they drew nearer, they were surprised to see a volume of smoke issuing from the chimney, but it was soon accounted for by the appearance of a tall, sunburnt, but pleasant-faced man, who was at once recognized by James Gordon as John Brown.

"Mrs. Jarvis left the key with me," he said, "two weeks ago, and my wife has aired the house more than once; but the walls are very damp, and she thought you would not be the worse of a bit of fire; so I just made bold to kindle a spark of a

blaze, though I had no orders from you. The wood is your own, for when I went to Farmer Evans, who is making a large clearing, and asked him for some of the dead wood lying about, he said, 'If it was for the new schoolmaster, I might take as much as I wanted,' and the same evening he sent over a wagon-load of his own accord. See, there it is; and I made our Ben cut a pile of it, just for you to begin with."

Wondering at such disinterested kindness—such as in their town-life they had never met with—they thanked their friendly neighbour, and entering the cottage, which was better within than without, they found a bright fire blazing, which, diffusing a grateful warmth and shedding a ruddy glow, lighted up the empty room and seemed to give them a cheerful welcome to their new dwelling. In an incredibly short time the house was arranged so as to enable them to pass a comfortable night; and they were about to prepare supper when John Brown, who had been assisting, stopped them by saying that his wife expected them to eat their evening meal with her, and that they must go home with him for this purpose.

"She said it would be too hard if, after coming so far, you had to cook your own supper, when you

had nothing fixed; so just come along, for I know she is waiting."

Although astonished at this unexpected hospitality, they could not refuse an invitation given with a sincerity not to be mistaken, and they followed him to his house, at the door of which they were met by his wife—a motherly, serious-looking woman, whose countenance at once inspired confidence, for her soft brown eyes were the index of a heart which, as far as can be said of any mortal, knew no guile. Her dress was of a most primitive fashion; her cotton gown wanted the sweeping length and fulness requisite for the present day; a checked handkerchief was folded over her shoulders and pinned down in front, and a cap, white as snow, with a quilled border in perfect order, fitted close around her pleased, placid face. She had never worn a jewel in her whole life, but her whole appearance indicated that she possessed "the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is of great price."

She greeted them kindly, and led the way into a room where a substantial meal awaited, to which our weary travellers did sufficient honour.

The meal ended, John Brown and his wife, with one or two other neighbours, accompanied them to

the cottage, and helped to finish "the fixings, so as to make the place have a home-look in the morning."

At length all was finished, the "Good-night" was said, the guests departed and the Gordons were left alone in their new dwelling. The Bible was then opened, a chapter read, and they worshipped God in a hymn of thankfulness and praise, and then they knelt together in prayer. The words were those of grateful acknowledgment to the great Giver of all good for thus providing such a home for them, and concluded with an earnest entreaty that they might be kept humble and vigilant in the performance of all the duties of their new life; that grace might be given to enable them to walk consistently with their professions as Christians; and that in every event that should befal them they might be sustained by a trustful reliance on a covenant-keeping God, and be made willing to receive the allotments of his providence as the very best that could happen them, acquiescing as calmly in joy as in sorrow. But most earnest of all was the petition that those of the family who had not yet discovered the things that belong to man's everlasting peace might be awakened to a sense of the great responsibility resting on every one, and that

they might be led to seek earnestly for that love, help and guidance which the Father of spirits alone can give, by which only they can hope to live rightly, to accomplish a warfare in which all must be engaged, and gain that victory whose reward is an unfading crown, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give "in the great day of his appearing to all who love him."

Sleep soon visited them—the sweet sleep which God gives to his beloved. It came like soft moonlight into the humble home of the Gordons, and under the shadow of its wings they rested sweetly, solaced with dreams of peace.

CHAPTER VI.

THE REALITIES AND THE DISCIPLINE OF DUTY.

WHEN Margaret awoke, the cool, gray light of dawn was streaking the horizon, and she was half bewildered by the strange sounds, so different from those heard in a city, which met her ears. The crowing of cocks as they passed the *reveille* from farm to farm, the cackling of geese, lowing of cattle and squealing of pigs, the usual accompaniments of country-life, were loud enough to disturb her slumbers completely; and awaking Mary, they began the labours of the day by preparing the morning meal. Mary made the fire while Margaret went for water to the little spring which flowed quietly from beneath a rock in the corner of the meadow-lot. The water was pure and sweet, but as no channel had been made to confine it within due limits, instead of a little streamlet, which would have been an ornament to the garden, it presented a rather unsightly object. The unconfined water had spread itself over a large

surface of flat ground, which was soon transformed into a swamp, where docks and tall nettles grew in wild profusion, and a part of it, making its way farther, formed a dirty pool almost in front of the house.

"There will be plenty of work to do here," said Margaret as she looked at the muddy space and brier-entangled garden; "but it is a pretty place, although so dreadfully out of order. Our task is fairly before us, but what of that? Father has often said that God did not send us into the world to be idle, but has given to every one a work of some kind; and all we have to do is not to look after our neighbour's work, but to keep our eyes fixed upon our own and labour at it cheerfully. And he said, too—and I know it is true—that work is no drudgery to one who has resolution; it is only a bugbear to the idle and the irresolute."

On returning to the house, she found little Ben Brown waiting at the door with a good-sized pitcher of milk, which his mother had sent them for their breakfast; "for," he added, "she knows you have no cow." Gladly accepting the proffered gift so thoughtfully bestowed, and wondering if all country-people were so kind, she soon had break-

fast ready, to which the milk proved a valuable addition.

"You were an early bird this morning, Margaret," said James Gordon, "and it is the early bird that catches the worm."

"I thought I was very early," replied Margaret, "but when I went out of doors I saw the smoke curling above the tree-tops, so I suppose everybody gets up early here. But I caught something better than a worm, for we all seem to enjoy this milk, which is better than any we ever had in all our lives. But, father, these are such kind people! Is everybody in the country so good?"

"Oh no," was the reply; "human nature is the same everywhere, but you will meet with more instances of disinterested kindness in country neighbourhoods than in large cities, where life is more artificial and every one seems to care only for themselves. But from what I have heard of the Browns, I think they would be the same in every place. Christianity with them is not a mere name; they practice the Bible precept, which says, 'Do unto others even as ye would they should do unto you.'"

"But, father," cried Mary, "sha'n't we have a cow soon? And then we need not trouble the

neighbours. And if we have chickens, it will be so nice to gather eggs to sell."

"But who is to milk the cow when we get her?" inquired her father. "A little town-girl like you would most likely run away from a cow if she saw one approaching."

"I will milk, father," said Margaret. "I will go over to Mrs. Brown's every day when the cows are to be milked and help her with her dairy-work, and so I shall have learned how to milk and manage a cow by the time we get one."

Breakfast over and the morning exercises concluded, the different members of the family separated to pursue their several occupations. James Gordon took up his crutches and prepared to call on such of the trustees and patrons of the school as lived in his neighbourhood. Squire Green was, with the exception of John Brown, the nearest; and, being considered rich, was perhaps one of the most influential men in the little community. Nevertheless, he was not liked. He had risen from a low condition to his present station by "lucky speculations," rather than by the straightforward course of honesty; but such is the homage paid to wealth everywhere, his money, whether well or ill gotten, caused him to be regarded with a certain

degree of respect, which he never would have gained from his own individual excellence. Coarse, ignorant and grasping, he cared for nothing but money; but because other people thought "edication" a great matter, and perhaps feeling the want of it in himself, he took great interest in the school and patronized it zealously. But as to the proprieties of life, his perceptions were too obtuse to comprehend their meaning. Nevertheless, all the faculties of his mind were alive to the fact that "farmin' and stillin' was a good, thrivin'" business; and having made more money than most of his better "edicated" neighbours, he assumed no small degree of importance, and looked down with contempt on those who were poor.

Of the person and character of his wife we need not say much. Her greatest charm was a relative one, consisting in her adaptation to her husband in his appearance, habits and worldly concerns. In one respect only she differed from him: he was surly and domineering, she was good-natured and yielding; that is, so far as he was concerned, for she never opposed his wishes or objected to his plans, let him change them as he pleased. She at once showed a desire to be "friendly with the schoolmaster's family," and often ran over to

have a chat. "They were poor people, to be sure, but it was so near, and in the country one does not mind such things much;" and she gave Alice a good deal of work. Her manner was more patronizing then than they liked, but they were prudent people, and avoided making remarks or repeating gossip which might be misrepresented or calculated to injure. Thus they were on friendly terms, but the friendship—if their intercourse could be called by such a name—was very different from that which subsisted between them and the Browns. The one was founded on a passing fancy or from motives of expediency; the other was a social bond formed between Christians, connecting the followers of Christ with each other, uniting their powers of usefulness, and assisting, consoling and cheering each other, as embodied in the injunction, "Bear ye one another's burden, and so fulfil the law of love." It was, therefore, a friendship based on too firm a foundation to change readily; and it never did change—it lasted through life.

James Gordon returned from his expedition in good spirits and without much fatigue. "I did not walk even to Mr. Upton's," said he; "neighbour Brown hitched up his wife's carryall and took me all round; and I am to open school next

Monday with a larger number of pupils than I expected or could have hoped for. Let us thank God for his goodness."

It was a long time since they had seen him looking so happy; and as he glanced around and saw the improvement their busy hands had made in the rooms lately so bare and cheerless, he said something about the comfort of having such a home, and bade them read the lesson of trust the incidents of the last month were so well formed to teach.

"It is not often that folks have their wishes granted as quickly as yours have been, Mary," said her father; "I have got you some hens and a pair of ducks, which will be here this evening, and two nice pigs for Robert. I think, with some assistance from us, he will soon learn how to attend them, and we shall see what store of eggs you will collect."

"Did you not get anything for Margaret?" asked Mary, as she noticed her sister's disappointed look.

"Nothing to-day," was the reply, "but our kind neighbour over the way, as I am no judge of cows, has promised to look out for a good one; and she will most likely be here by the time that Margaret

has finished her apprenticeship in the art of milking and butter-making."

They soon resumed their late routine of life, only they found they had more and harder work to do in the country than in town, but then they were less interrupted, and they had leisure to read as formerly; for James Gordon did not consider it a waste of time to read such books as were likely to enlarge and improve the mind. "Many persons think that they have no time to read," he would say, "but I never like to neglect one duty at the expense of another, and everything that tends to improvement is a duty. It is an instinct to be proved by experience, rather than by rule, that every one makes time for what they like to do; and if important duties are performed in due season and with regularity, none need be neglected for the sake of books."

But he was far more earnest in his endeavour to educate his children for a higher life in a world to come, and was very careful never to suffer an opportunity to pass without saying something upon the subject he deemed of paramount importance, and calculated to deepen the religious principles which he had instilled at their earliest age, in order that these principles might take such firm

root as would sustain them in the seasons of doubt and conflict and struggle which mark the life of every one. His mind was so well stored with scriptural truths that he had ever a word in season, a happy thought or cheerful suggestion, which associated themselves with the common events of every-day life, making the most of everything in regard to spiritual teaching, finding "tongues in books, sermons in stones and good in everything."

One evening, after the labours of a busy day were closed, he spoke of the happy feeling which is experienced by those who have trust in God—the meek, heartfelt, loving resignation of a spirit obedient to a Father's will, believing that every trial is sent for good, and that none are afflicted more than they can bear. "We have only to look back on our own circumstances a few weeks ago," said he, "and contrast them with our present comparative comfort. God sent help at a time when everything seemed darkest; and can we now ever doubt but that in all the trials we may yet have to encounter he will order everything aright, and give us 'strength according to our day,' filling our hearts with heavenly love and enabling us in that to find our rest?"

"But, father," said Margaret, "it is very hard

to have such faith. One must be perfect before they get so far as that. I am sure it is a lesson I shall never learn."

"Never! It is a long time," was the reply; "and there is no lesson taught in the Bible which is *too* hard for you to learn if you set about it in the right way. Do you not every day repeat the petition, 'Thy will be done,' and yet attach no meaning to the words? Is it not a mockery to pray that you may submit in a right spirit to whatever God may decree, if you do not believe that it is possible for you to do so? No, Margaret; pray that the gift of strong faith may be granted to you; and when you come to God to ask for his favour, let your supplication be made humbly and sincerely, with no hope of acceptance for your own sake, but resting solely on the merits and intercession of the Saviour, in whose name and for whose sake all prayer ought to be made. A day will come when you will find that the world is not an easy place to travel through; there is but one safe road to keep on in, as I know, from first to last, and that is to follow the footprints of the Lord himself. If you have the Saviour's hand to guide you, you do not need anything else, for it upholds while it guides, and the same hand that upholds

and guides is able to bind up any wounds that may be received, even such as the possession of the whole world cannot cure. No happiness is stable which is founded upon what the allurements of the world promise: the truest happiness is found in the service of God, and doing our allotted work with an eye single to his glory. Have faith in him, my children, perfect trust in him through Christ, and he will make you happy in this life by the enjoyment of peace of conscience, and in heaven by possession of the inheritance promised to the just, even a crown of rejoicing, such as the apostle hoped for."

"Do you not think, father," asked Margaret, "that we would all be happier if we knew beforehand what was to happen us? We need never then fret—and we were so troubled last winter—about anything, for we would know just what we ought to do and how things would turn out. And why is it that some are so rich and others so poor? I have always wished for riches. I am sure all rich people are happy, for they can get everything they want, and have plenty to give to the poor, like that good Mrs. Chester whom we used to sew for in N——."

"To your first question," said her father, "I

will answer that as God has seen good to shroud the future in darkness, it ought to be enough for us to recognize the mercy that leads us on daily, step by step, assured that whether for prosperity or adversity, our lot will be right, for all is of his appointing, and he will always do what is best for us. All we have to do is to follow the example of One holy, harmless and undefiled, separate from sinners and made higher than the heavens, and rely upon the assurance which he has given us that none who truly love God will ever be forsaken, for the very hairs of their heads are numbered. And suppose we knew our destiny, we could not change it; therefore let us be content to take what God sends, as being all for the best. What higher motives can we have for action, or what surer support in affliction, than to follow him, to trust on him and to rejoice in being a partaker of his cross here, in the hopes of receiving the fulness of his joy hereafter."

"But, father," said Margaret, not yet convinced that wealth was not happiness, "does not God give people riches? and if he does so it cannot be wrong to wish for them. I have often wondered that he made us so poor, and have wished so much that you were rich, for then we would be respected; for

when I went to school in N—— I noticed that the girls whose fathers were rich—and some of them were not nice girls at all—were praised and looked up to, while we that were poor were slighted."

"That is the way of the world," said her father; "nevertheless we are not to question, but to submit to the decree of One whose wisdom is unerring. It is not every one who can be trusted with riches; and therefore it may have pleased God to make us poor, because he knew that the wealth you seem so much to desire would only prove a snare and temptation. But there is no reason, Margaret, why you may not be rich."

"How, father?" asked the girl, eagerly. "I am sure strange things must take place before *we* can get enough money to be called rich."

"The gain of money is not the only nor the true wealth," was the answer. "Fires may burn it, floods may drown it, winds sweep it away, moth and rust corrupt it and robbers make it their prey. Men weary themselves and often peril their souls to gain it, and then die and leave it behind. The soul of the richest prince goes forth like that of the wayside beggar without a garment. But, my dear child, there is another kind of riches, which is not kept in the purse, but in the heart. Those who

possess them are not always, indeed, praised by men, but they have the praise of God. Have you forgotten what our Lord says, 'How hardly shall they that have riches enter the kingdom of heaven!' or the beautiful prayer found in the thirtieth chapter of Proverbs? There is a certain kind of homage paid by the world to wealth, whether well or ill-gotten, but *true* respect is paid to character only, and it may be won by a person in any condition who is really faithful and high-principled, obeying the precepts and following the example of Him who although he was rich became poor that we through his poverty might be made rich. Strive, therefore, instead of wishing for the riches of the world, to merit this respect by conforming your life to the gospel rules, and you will have not only the good-will of your fellow-men, but the approbation of your own heart, which will be filled with a joy and peace independent of outward joy or sorrow—a deep, soulfelt satisfaction, the result of that obedience to the will of God to which we yield implicitly, believing that 'he doeth all things well.' Strive ever *to be* good, and throughout life endeavour *to do* good to all. So, although you may always as now be poor in this world's goods, you may be rich in faith and look forward

to an inheritance in heaven and a crown which is incorruptible and never-fading."

Margaret was silent; the felt that what her father had said was not mere words, for his life was a commentary on what he professed to believe. His prayers, spiritual and earnest, were "as if he met his Maker face to face," his daily walk like that of one intimate with Christ; but the doctrine of implicit faith he was endeavouring to inculcate appeared too hard to be received by the rebellious heart of childhood. She knew that he was right, but she was not just now ready to give up all. Her "eyes were as yet holden" that she could not see, but a time was not far distant when they would be opened to the full discernment of the truth of all that her father had said; and those teachings, brought back by memory, were yet to prove way-marks to guide her on the rugged path she was ere long destined to pursue.

If we have dwelt longer on these conversations than may have been agreeable to our young readers, and they think we have been too didactic, we must plead in excuse the value we attach to home teaching, deeming it of more importance than that derived from pursuit of science or rules of schools; for, though they may teach of all created things,

all is little when weighed in the balance against that which tells of the future destiny of immortal souls. There is a wide difference between knowledge and wisdom; the first, gained in schools or in intercourse with the world, improves the intellect; the latter, if gained in the school of Christ, educates the heart, making wise unto salvation. Religion is of itself an education, for it involves a certain amount of mental training, and it affords inducements and means for more. "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added thereto," says the holy Word; and it is in the home circle that a bias to such a search must be given. Much is said about education in the present day, and none can value the advantages it confers more than ourselves, but our own experience has shown us that the easiest, cheapest and most thorough education is in Christ's school; for, as the entrance of God's word gives light to all, bestowing understanding upon the simple, so even in this sense the "fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom," or, indeed, in other words, religion itself is an education. What we are is of infinitely more importance than what we know; and it ought to be the aim of all Christian parents so to cultivate the heart and affections

that the growth of the Christian graces shall at least keep pace with the enlargement of the understanding. And may we not also be forgiven when we tell the young how interesting it is for those far on in the journey of life, while looking back, to trace the words and seemingly trifling incidents which have left lasting effects upon the character. It makes the existence of every day more important, for who can avoid reflecting on the amount of good and evil for one's self or others which may be involved in petty occurrences and passing observations—for God can sanctify the small as well as the great events of our lives—when experience has warned us of their consequences? "Train up a child in the way that he should go," and a careful observer will in most cases be able to prophesy the bent of the whole life from the direction it takes during its early days. And is it not in the home circle and from the home teaching that those ideas are received and take such deep root that they at last become the fixed laws and motives of life? The impressions of childhood are deep and lasting: what care, then, is required to influence and form a child's character, and engraft upon it principles that never can be shaken! Precept and example are more in those early days than teaching from books. Like the air

they breathe, for the most part insensibly, children learn to think and observe from the moral atmosphere by which they are surrounded; and it is pleasant to remark that in most cases the tendency of the young is to rise to the level of the purest minds with which they are brought in contact. "Even," says one, "in the untaught heathen there is the wreck of a perfect nature, the appreciation of moral goodness: how much more, then, in the baptized, enlightened Christian!" And so it happens that even occasional intercourse with persons thoroughly pure-minded and devoted, at an age when the character is forming, will often elevate the moral tone, and in the end counteract the evil of weeks, months and even years of more apparently direct influence.

The moral atmosphere of the Gordons' home and the scriptural teaching of the father being such as we have described, it is not wonderful that the character of the children should insensibly be moulded for their future by the example placed before them by their parents. Home was the sphere of their excellence; poverty placed no impediment to the happiness that reigned at their fireside, or interfered with the perfect order, regularity and quiet with which their domestic con-

cerns were conducted, and formed the basis of their contentment. Abroad they were only the "lame schoolmaster's family," and considered as being too strict and methodistical. When these remarks were repeated to them they provoked no reply, nor for a moment interfered with the tranquil happiness of their lives. And they were happy, those Gordon children, blind boy and all. Too young to take thought for the future, the present—as they compared it with their late privations and discomfort—was everything to them, for with the hoping spirit of early life they never anticipated that clouds could overshadow them again. And although still poor, and constantly employed in homely and laborious tasks, they were happy in their humble home, for here the fundamental principles of Christianity were daily unfolded, not only in words but in daily practice. Then why should they not have been happy? They read in the beautiful language found on the inspired page that a man's life consisteth not in the "abundance of the things that he possesses," and learned also from the same source that "those only are the truly rich who, in the sure confidence of childlike faith, can delight in the abundance of that peace" which is vouchsafed by infinite and untiring Love to those who devote

themselves fully to his service, and proves an unfailing solace in circumstances when worldly wealth and homes are of no avail.

The Gordons found their country life delightful, not only from its novelty, but from the simple and healthful pleasures they enjoyed in the discharge of the many new duties they were now called upon to perform. They wanted nothing better; and why should they? for, as a late author has written, "they had their parents, brothers, sisters, and a peaceful home; kind familiar faces, the sheep and cows in the meadows, the birds on the trees, the glad sunshine, the blue sky above their heads, and God, who lived in it; that was all, *but what a beautiful all!*"

Great was their delight when the pretty brown cow arrived. "Uncle John" Brown pronounced her excellent, and assured Margaret that she would pay her for all her trouble. This proved true, and after a time the reputation of the "schoolmaster's cow" was so great that several of their farming neighbours offered a large price for her, but her owner would not part with her. Margaret soon learned to manage her little dairy so as to turn it to profit. The butter she made was of excellent quality and brought a good price in the market of

C——, and this, aided by the industry practiced by the others, added so much to their small means that in a short time they were able to replace their little capital which their sore distress in N—— had obliged them to withdraw from the bank.

Alice, in a short time, had plenty of sewing; Robert worked at baskets and mats; Mary plaited straw, which her mother made up into hats, which soon came into favour with the harvest-men and others. Margaret and Mary went regularly to school, but yet found time to attend to home duties, and it was surprising what they accomplished. They were in an atmosphere of usefulness; not a moment was spent idly; they were happy in their occupations and duties, for they were their pleasures, and they had none of those trifling worries at home which are such common causes of annoyance in the domestic circle. Quiet, unobtrusive and industrious, they soon won the respect of the little community and had many visitors. Some might have been elated by such marks of favour as they received, and have been drawn aside from duty; but while they treated all with the courtesy ever due to good intentions, they also remembered the injunction found in Proverbs, which says, "Keep

thy foot from thy neighbour's house;" and thus, never overstepping the boundary prescribed by their position, they maintained the regard which might otherwise have been lessened by too much familiarity.

CHAPTER VII.

THE YOUNG GARDENERS, AND LIFE IN EARNEST.

IT is often surprising to see what can be accomplished by industry directed by willing hearts and busy hands; and the transformation of everything about the homestead of the Gordons, even in the first summer after their removal there, awoke the wonder how, in so short a time, they could accomplish so much. But we have often seen the fact exemplified that the more one has to do the more one learns how to find time to do it in; and we believe, too, that nothing makes people happier than to have plenty to do and doing it with all their might. It has been said that the hardest manual labour is less fatiguing than habitual idleness—just as rust corrodes and wears away the polished steel more quickly than constant rubbing; and our experience can bear witness that the remark is a true one. Margaret and Mary had a great deal to do; but, notwithstanding Kitty Green and others told them that it was degrading to

make slaves of themselves by doing such an amount of out-door work, they were happy because they felt they were doing their duty. They rose with the sun, milked the cow and worked in the garden until breakfast, which their mother prepared, was ready, or learned their lessons for school. In some of the rougher tasks they had at first to be assisted by stronger hands: the garden had to be cleared from briers, a channel dug to confine the straying waters of the little spring, and, to gratify Margaret in her love for flowers, the little waste space in front of the house was enclosed by a rude paling and, dug up, was laid off in borders.

By the time a second summer came a complete transformation had taken place. The weather-stained walls were curtained with the twining branches of the honeysuckle, over which the humming-birds flitted all day long, and the white clematis and "traveller's joy," as the children call it, flung their fairy flowers in reckless profusion on the green patches of grass or the borders below. The garden, instead of a mass of tangled briers, now showed a wealth of vegetables, which were sent to market; and, instead of the unsightly mud-hole formed in front of the house by the wandering

water of the spring, a little rill flowed through its channel into a pool at a short distance below, where Mary's ducks swam and the cattle drank. Nothing could exceed the neatness and order of the whole; it showed the bent of mind of those who dwelt within the lowly home, and the character of the entire small territory was that of complete cultivation, denoting thrift and comfort in the highest degree. Nor were the arrangements of the interior of the cottage less perfect than the pastoral beauty of its surroundings which we have tried to describe. Alice Gordon was a perfect contrast to Mrs. Green, and her household rule differed from that of her neighbour accordingly. One was an active and bustling ruler; gentleness and serenity were the prevailing qualities of the disposition of the other, and, although always practicing the most persevering industry, she allowed the stream of life quietly to murmur by in her contentment. There was no waste, no extravagance, no carelessness under her mild domestic dominion, but her arrangements were all noiseless in their regularity and proceeded in the spirit of peace.

She had a sister in Philadelphia, the wife of a worthy mechanic, with whom a constant communication was had through John Brown, who was

altogether a market-gardener, and mostly carried his produce to the city, on account of its bringing a better price than in the market of C——. James Gordon still continued his wood-carving in the long winter evenings or in spare hours, and when a lot of articles was finished, "Uncle John" carried them to his brother-in-law, who disposed of them readily.

Mrs. Maxwell, knowing how fond Margaret was of flowers, had sent quite a large package of choice seeds and cuttings, which she cultivated most carefully, and found herself well repaid. She had never thought of turning her flowers to profit until one day a neighbour, who came on a visit, went out to see the garden, and was loud in praise of those beautiful children of the earth, then in their highest bloom. "I wonder that you do not make them up into bouquets and sell them; they are mostly rare flowers and will bring a good price." Margaret at once acted on the suggestion, and found the task both pleasant and profitable.

Weeks, months and even years passed, and life flowed on in one calm, unbroken current, undisturbed except by one event, which was, however, soon settled. It was an offer from old Mrs. Jarvis that James Gordon should buy the cottage, which

she was obliged to sell. "Squire Green," her son-in-law said, "would like to have the little place, but he had always been a bad neighbour, and Mrs. Jarvis disliked him too much to wish to have any dealings with him. But it must be sold, and as you have expended so much industry upon it, it is right to make you the first offer." James Gordon hesitated; he could not bear the idea of going in debt. There was, however, in this case no alternative; he must either buy the cottage or remove elsewhere. But where was that elsewhere? Not in the near neighbourhood, and, crippled as he was, he could not walk to any great distance. The family industry, aided by frugality and good management, had brought comparative prosperity. He counted their savings, and found that he could make the first payment: by the time the second was due it could be met by the same means—namely, his salary and the proceeds of the family efforts. There was nothing to be dreaded but a failure of health; and so, with the advice of his two trusty friends, Mr. Upton, his pastor, and John Brown, he became, instead of tenant, owner of the little homestead. And may he not be pardoned if he surveyed it, "his own," with a feeling of great satisfaction; for would it not be a permanent

home for his family if he should be called away by death? And as he had no fear of having incurred a debt which he did not know how he was to pay, he gave way to the pleasant feeling of ownership, mingled, however, with an ever-abiding sense of the mercy which had followed him all his life, and the goodness which had cast the lines in such pleasant places.

Thus time rolled on, each day freighted with its own mission, bringing few marked changes, but all things working silently toward the allotted trial of each, even as from the hour of our birth "the imperceptible progress of decay is leading us forward to the final hour of death."

CHAPTER VIII.

DIFFICULT DUTIES AND DARK CLOUDS.

WE must now resume the thread of our narrative, which was interrupted at the close of the first chapter in order to introduce the schoolmaster's family more closely to our readers and give them a full insight into the home-training as practiced there. The education bestowed in that home circle differed greatly from that received in schools. The cultivation of the Christian graces as enjoined in the holy Word was carefully and constantly attended to, and the seeds of truth sown in the dawning mind were such as would germinate and flourish throughout life, bring forth fruit and draw down upon them the benediction of God —that blessing promised to those who walk in the ways of truth, which alone maketh rich and addeth no sorrow.

When Margaret Gordon determined to conquer self and pursue the course of conduct advised by her father toward her faithless friend, she was well

aware of the difficult duty she had to perform. We have already told our readers that her temper was quick; and, sensitive almost to morbidness, with a full share of natural pride, she shrank from the reproach of being "mean-spirited" which she was sure of meeting from her companions, who could not appreciate the motives by which her inner life was regulated. The affair of the blotted copy-book had been largely discussed in the school circle; and, as Kitty Green was by no means a favourite with the girls, they were all anxious and urgent with Margaret that her base conduct should be resented, as it deserved, by avoidance and contempt. Such urgings, aided by her natural inclinations against the "law of love," which teaches gentleness and forbearance, made the task of meeting her in a Christian spirit a most difficult one; but, watchful and prudent, careful of what she said, but, above all, with the aid of Him without whom all efforts are vain, she was enabled to conquer the promptings of an unconverted heart and obey the command which bids, "Avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath;" in this following the example of Him who, "when reviled, reviled not again."

She had greatly dreaded the first meeting with

the friend she had loved so well and found so treacherous, whilst her resentment was still at glowing heat, but she was spared the trial, for she learned almost immediately that Kitty had left home, a day or two after the examination, to spend the whole vacation abroad. Keeping closely at home and avoiding all opportunity for gossip, which always adds fuel to flame already kindled, the first acuteness of her sense of wrong gradually abated, and she rose superior to the temptation of "taking her own part," and resolutely forbore to speak on the subject. It cost, however, a great effort; and the victory was not obtained without frequent supplications at a throne of grace, from which, when approached in sincerity, no one is ever turned away unheard. Her prayers were the outpourings of an earnest, loving and humble heart, which, conscious of its own weakness, brought all its troubles and sorrows to One whose compassions fail not, believing that, although her prayer might not be granted according to her wish, it would certainly be answered according to her need. There is always comfort in prayer, as Margaret experienced. The sharp pang occasioned by her mortifying failure, and knowledge of its cause, subsided into softer feelings than she could have

readily believed; and, trusting, as her father had said, "that all things should work together for good," before the vacation was ended she felt herself quite ready to forgive.

There are periods in the lives of all when events, seemingly trifling in themselves, occur which, never forgotten, affect the whole history of after-life, while days fraught with the most important consequences often open, pass and close without leaving anything to mark them as different from others. Margaret's trouble, compared with what she was yet to meet with in the course of life's discipline, was seemingly trifling, as it was only a childish difficulty; but it was important to her, for its influence was most salutary. It is very good for us all occasionally to have our habits broken in upon, and be obliged to look upon life under a new aspect, for then the glance turned inward enables us not only better to see what we are ourselves, but to recognize that in every period of life care and trouble is the lot of all—the fulfilment of the sentence pronounced on our first parents, and from which there is no escape. God, who "sees not as man sees," and views the sins and passions which lie dormant and unsuspected in the heart, and which must be extinguished and

destroyed before any one can be fitted for the kingdom of his holiness, has ordained a warfare which must be endured before a regenerate nature can fully triumph over the temptations of Satan; and those whom he loves are often the most severely tried. Happy are they who, like Margaret Gordon, are called to exercise self-discipline in youth, if they, armed with the shield of faith, prepare for the battle which every one must meet in life, strong in the faith of heavenly protection, for they are safe; but there are many who are harassed by thoughts of the responsibilities of existence and its final destination, who have no such safeguard. Such may well be prayed for, for their peril is great. Margaret learned early to think, but girls of fifteen and sixteen are deeper thinkers and have much quicker perceptions than the world gives them credit for; and there is, perhaps, no age at which the formation of the mind from common circumstances goes on so rapidly as in the space between the years of fifteen and eighteen; and a careful observer would in many cases be able to prophesy the bent of the whole life from the direction it then takes. The ideas which are then collected are pondered upon, remodelled and engrafted in the mind—imbibed insensibly, indeed, like the

air they breathe—become their own property, influence and educate, teaching the exercise of the powers of thought and observation. This was true in regard to the schoolmaster's daughter. The trifling incident we have related, but more the pain she had suffered from the treacherous behaviour of the friend she had loved and trusted, had been a sore trial, and the painful experience it had brought left a lasting effect upon her character. In the end, however, it proved a blessing; for, breaking in upon the confidence of childhood, which believes what it hopes for, anticipating no change, it proved a salutary lesson. She now learned to think and observe things as they were, rather than as they seemed, and to discover that life is a serious matter, given for important purposes and involving great responsibilities. No one can live with persons thoroughly pure-minded and devoted without having the whole moral tone elevated; and with the example and advice of Christian parents constantly before her, it was not wonderful that, always thoughtful beyond her years, Margaret should see things in the same light and fix her affections upon the same objects; and, religion being of paramount importance with them, it became a subject of great importance to

her, and her young heart began to awake from the dreams of earth and prepare for the warfare of eternity. She was religious; that is, she was consistent and conscientious, and most careful that her daily life should agree with the principles by which she professed to be governed. But as yet her religion had not enabled her to comprehend the full meaning of those wonderful words which tell of that "eternal counsel of the Most High, by which the children of his adoption, the redeemed and the forgiven, are gathered together in one body under Christ their Head, and made to be the fulness of him that filleth all," for its motive was duty, not love—that love which is the fruit of the Spirit and the perfection of religion. But the mighty change which is effected only by the operation of the Spirit of grace, without which, the Scriptures declare "none can see the kingdom of God," began in her heart; but its development was not rapid. She had much to contend with in her quick temper and natural pride, and many hard struggles and battles with self had to be encountered before she experienced that peace which passeth all understanding, and, found only in the service of God, is the privilege of his children to enjoy.

The school once more began, but, owing to some pressing domestic duties, Margaret could not go for a few days; and great was her surprise on going to her seat to find Martha Harding in Kitty Green's place. She was greatly pained by this demonstration, but her trouble was by no means lessened by the change in Kitty's manner, which was marked by a visible constraint and avoidance of every opportunity of intercourse, for she felt that Margaret's presence was a steady although silent reproach; and, as in many other cases, from the time she had injured her she had become her enemy. This conduct Margaret was not slow to observe; but she was able to bear the feelings it was calculated to provoke in silence, for the example of One whom she was now learning to serve taught her how to suffer and to bear, how to rule her spirit and bring it into subjection to the law of God. But which of the two was the happier?—Margaret, in her painful and continual struggle with self, or Kitty, in yielding to the dominion of a sinful heart, by which, in giving way to the exercise of sinful passions, she endeavoured to cause unhappiness to one she had already injured, but more effectually succeeded in disturbing her own peace? Conscience is a mighty monitor, appointed by God himself to

speak to the hearts of all, and never fails to admonish against the doing of an evil deed, thinking of an evil thought or the speaking of an evil word; and so, although by no means penitent or having the least intention of acknowledging her fault, she felt herself altogether uncomfortable. No one can transgress the law of God with impunity; and, painfully conscious of the injury she had done, she could not meet one who had ever been her friend without a feeling of shame, and although she viewed her conduct in a less reprehensible light than most would have done, she imagined that she saw a change in her school-companions, and that in every whispering among them she was being blamed. She was not ashamed of what she had done, but she dreaded losing the respect of her schoolmates; caring more for the contempt of mortals like herself than the displeasure of God. She had never, indeed, been taught, like Margaret, that the evil deed, or thought or work, although forgiven, must yet remain recorded in the awful book of remembrance, and will appear as witness against us on the day when we stand before the judgment-seat to answer for the deeds done in the body; but although she thought little of the divine law she had broken, there was a tormenting thorn in her

side which forbade enjoyment. Poor Kitty! When she committed the act which gave her a temporary advantage and a short space for triumph over her mortified companion, she little thought what bitter hours she was storing up for herself. The way of the transgressor is hard; she felt the want of her former pleasant intercourse with Margaret; and although still surrounded by all in which she had hitherto been happy, and no word of reproach or hint that her base act had been witnessed had been spoken, she was, even when she seemed gayest, oppressed with a cloud of miserable feelings arising from the gnawings of conscience; and there were times when she would have been glad could she have exchanged her unfair victory for the defeat she had caused to another, and the dread of which had made her sin.

Margaret had much to suffer, not only from her own wounded feelings, but also from the remarks of her companions on Kitty's changed behaviour, and the time was not long passed when she would have resented it. But she had latterly learned better to understand her own heart and feel how great was her own need of forgiveness; for how often had she forgotten her duty to God and strayed from the way in which he had allotted those who wished to

be his children to walk. And the spirit of forgiveness took the place of the spirit of wrath, but the conquest was not easily gained, nor without aid from a higher source than that of her own resolution. "Seventy times seven," she repeated often to herself, and then she entreated that a "right spirit" might be granted her; and God, who is always more ready to hear than man is to ask, in the abundance of his mercy listened to the petition made in the name and for the sake of the Saviour, and bestowed the blessing she asked for. "It must be for the best," she said to herself, although her heart was pained by this demonstration on the part of Kitty, so uncalled for, so undeserved; but she would not suffer her mind to dwell upon the painful subject. Other duties were before her—all-absorbing duties: her late failure must be made up, the good opinion necessary to ensure her success as a scholar to be regained, and for this great diligence was necessary.

She was by no means dissatisfied with the change which made Martha Harding her desk-companion. Amiable, truthful, upright, of most honest purpose and beloved by all, she was the one to whom, had she been allowed to choose, she would have given the preference above all the rest—one whom Mar-

garet and everybody else liked. She was the daughter of a farmer who lived quite near to the schoolmaster's cottage, and although his family, for the most part, held themselves aloof from society, they were on friendly terms with the Gordons. Mr. Harding, a man of excellent character, upright and just in his dealings with every one, was the last representative of a large and old family, who had come over in the early days of the colony, and owned an immense tract of land in that neighbourhood. But many generations had come and gone in the lapse of time, like the leaves that bud in spring and fall withered in autumn, until only one solitary branch of the family tree remained, and the once wide possessions had dwindled down to a common-sized farm. And even this, it was whispered, was heavily encumbered, and Squire Green, who spared no one, often loudly declared that it would not be long until it was brought under the hammer. Most folks thought the Hardings proud because they went abroad but seldom, but they made no pretension to be better than their neighbours, but behaved to every one with courtesy and respect. Mrs. Harding had brought Alice a good deal of work, and as they thus became acquainted they learned to esteem each other. Poverty is said to

be the touchstone of worth, and in this case it proved so; for, as they lived near, the intercourse, at first that of business only, grew into a lasting friendship, of which the Greens were not a little jealous. But the Gordons were careful not to provoke enmity, and avoided giving offence to any, either by undue familiarity or too much distance, and thus, by their consistent course, secured the respect of all who knew them. Martha was a good and honest-hearted girl, firm in principle and energetic in action, but she had not, as she said, love for books and had a horror of literature, and often laughingly declared that she would rather milk cows all day than keep a school, and that feeding pigs, in her opinion, was preferable to sewing, which she abhorred. Notwithstanding these assertions, she was by no means coarse or vulgar; she was a pretty fair scholar, although she did not love books, but considerate and thoughtful, and eminently practical, usefulness was what she was intended for in life, evidently; her quickness in work to be done by the hand and her quiet, domestic tastes all tended that way. She could never, she said, expect to make a sensation by her cleverness, so she must content herself by trying to be useful.

There had been a great deal of good done in the

little community under Mr. Upton's ministry, who, hardworking and devoted, spared no pains in the discharge of his sacred duties. He was not faultless, and often met with opposition to his measures; sometimes, too, he was a little impatient, which provoked censure; but he was earnest, sincerely earnest, in thought, word and action; and it is true, as one has remarked, that when all other powers have been tried and failed, it will be found that "earnestness is the fulcrum upon which to rest the moral lever which is to raise the world." At the time of which we write Sabbath-schools were not common, as they are now, and although they had been established in cities or large towns, they were by no means generally known; and, therefore, as very few persons had ever heard of such institutions, the minds of the people belonging to that rustic congregation were by no means prepared to enter into the Sunday-school plan with the ardour expected by Mr. Upton. But the earnestness which formed so large a part of his character was not to be baffled; aware that much opposition existed—for they were an old-fashioned people, and had set notions which were hard to be removed—he strove to conquer it by gentle means rather than forcible argument. He answered their objections patiently,

endeavoured to remove their prejudices by gentle reasoning, and, unwearied in efforts to bring about what he so much desired by kind deportment and the affectionate interest in their welfare, he at last succeeded in gaining over some of the most determined opponents to accede to his proposal so far as to consent that notice from the pulpit should be given requesting a meeting. The notice was given, accompanied with his own views on the subject and a short history of the institution, and an urgent appeal was made to the parents upon the importance of securing for their children this opportunity for religious instruction.

It was the custom in those country churches to have two sermons, with a short interval between them; and now, during the intermission between the morning and afternoon services, the new project was the main subject of conversation among the various groups assembled there. We cannot detain our readers to listen to the earnest discussions had among them; some of the objections, however, were as follows: One had not much opinion of Bible learning, but would rather that his children would not hear much on those subjects till they were able to judge for themselves and choose their own creed. Another had been told

that it was to be a charity school, and he wanted no charity; he was willing and able to pay for all the learning his children could get on week-days without having them schooled for nothing on Sundays. Squire Green was loud in his opposition. "Mr. Upton," he said, "need not come to him with any of his new-fangled notions; if he did, he would give him a piece of his mind; why, it was the most onreasonablest thing he ever heard of, expecting rich people's children to teach school on Sundays."

Children, however, generally have much influence in such matters. The Sunday-school was as largely discussed among them as it was among their elders, and, as the young love novelty, they were all desirous to go to Sunday-school. They thus were of material aid to Mr. Upton in his endeavour to conquer the prejudices of the parents; and the school was commenced at first with few scholars, but in a short time it grew into such favour with the whole community that the schoolhouse—their first place of meeting—had to be exchanged for the church. Such was the state of things when the schoolmaster's family came among them. James Gordon was soon chosen superintendent, and proved most faithful, co-operating

with the pastor. He became as popular and as much beloved in his Sunday teaching as he was in his week-day, for, gentle, impartial and always ready with the "word in season," he gained the hearts of all. Even Squire Green, rough and pompous as he was, could not quarrel with him, as he did with everybody else, but was obliged to treat the "lame schoolmaster," as he always termed him, with involuntary respect. His consistent course and Christian life was an example for all, and the good he did, as well as that which by his precepts and counsel he enabled others to do, will never be fully known until that day when the "secrets of many hearts are revealed."

Sabbath-schools were in those days differently conducted from what they are at present, and perhaps the advantages were small compared to those of Sabbath-schools in the present day. Books and tickets were then given as rewards, but are now universally relinquished. It may be for a better rule, but certainly one great benefit derived from that system of teaching was learning to repeat large portions of the sacred Scriptures. These were lodged in the memory, to be the subject of future thought and reflection; and so permanent has been the benefit received from early commit-

ting so much of the Scriptures that many aged persons can repeat whole chapters learned at Sabbath-school without the least prompting.

The schoolmaster's children had been scholars in the school until the year to which our story belongs, when Margaret was called on to become a teacher, to which request she with much diffidence consented. Her father had so often spoken of the responsibility of a Sabbath-school teacher, and how careful such should be that while endeavouring to persuade others to their duty they should also be solicitous for themselves. How could a teacher of others expect the blessing of God upon his efforts if he was not anxious for his own eternal welfare? And was there not danger lest, if, even through the means of such an one, His mercy should benefit others, the one who had been made the instrument of that mercy should become a cast-away? Margaret's awakening to a sense of the one great responsibility of life had been slow, but latterly the development had become more rapid. She clearly discerned that a missionary spirit was necessary to discharge the duties of a Sabbath-school teacher properly, and so it was that she reluctantly consented to take an employment which required intelligence, zeal, patience and every other

Christian grace, and to which she felt herself incompetent. But the very knowledge of this incompetency led her to greater earnestness in seeking salvation, although as yet she made no profession. She had had a pleasant class assigned her, in whom she took great interest, and, through her father's instructions, taught them more in accordance with the mode of the present day than that of the time of which we write. James Gordon had an excellent Commentary, which Margaret studied carefully, and thus was able to explain the Bible lessons which they committed to memory so as to enlighten them as to their true meaning; and she not only found pleasure in the task as regarded others, but it proved very profitable to herself.

This pleasant work was, however, soon interrupted. She might, in the love of her Sabbath-school pupils and the approbation of their parents—both of which she had—have become vain-glorious and forgetful of Him to whom alone all homage belongs, had she not in the solemn providence of God been called to the performance of another duty, which not only demanded an exercise of that quiet spirit of self-sacrifice, but of patience and forbearance, which in after life were the ruling features of her character. One Sunday morning she

had gone to the church at an earlier hour than usual. A few of the scholars were there, but not one of hers. She seated herself in the old-fashioned square pew to wait their coming, and, as she had leisure to look around, she saw six or seven coloured girls standing in a group near the door, looking anxiously at every one who entered. Margaret wondered what their being there meant. She had not, however, much time to think about it; her class soon assembled, the preliminary exercises were had, and she became so absorbed in her duty of teaching that she was quite startled by Mr. Upton's voice mentioning her name. He came to make a particular request of her, which was that she should give up her present class, for whom there would be no difficulty in procuring a teacher, and take those poor coloured girls, whom no one was willing to teach.

"I have tried every one," he said, "and have come to you at last. Would you have those poor girls sent away? Is there no one to care for the souls of those for whom Christ, too, hath died? If a true missionary spirit exists among us, can it be exercised better than in teaching those who have no other means of instruction, and have come up voluntarily to be instructed in the right way?"

Margaret hesitated; she, too, had her prejudices, and her natural pride revolted from undertaking a task which had been so decidedly refused by all the others. A deep blush overspread her features, and she was about to utter a negative, but, as she raised her eyes, her glance fell upon her father's face, which, as he stood near the humble group, beamed with an expression which could not be mistaken, and she read the thoughts that were passing in his mind. There was a look of entreaty, too, in those sable faces. Representatives of a stricken and down-trodden race, their claims might be rejected by those to whom their subjection was given; but was there not an assurance that "Ethiopia, too, should stretch out her hands unto God?" and that, since God hath made "of one blood all nations of men," the blessing of redemption, through the All-atoning sacrifice, should be extended to every kindred and tongue and people and nation? As she gazed upon the suppliants, these truths flashed over her mind. The intended denial was not uttered: an assent, not altogether a cordial one, was given, and the dark-hued children of bondage took the place of those whom she had so loved to teach. She gave them up with regret, and commenced her new task, satisfied

but not glad. She undertook it from a sense of duty only, and she feared that want of earnestness of purpose and interest in the work would cause her to fail in its discharge. She had yet to learn that warmth and love are the rewards of duty. Her religious life was unfolding slowly; she had to pass through a severer discipline before its growth was perfected. But the foundation of her character was true. Her disposition was grafted upon candour and honesty of purpose, and, conscientious and thoughtful, it was her constant effort that her daily life should agree with the principles by which she professed to be governed; and therefore there was more than hope—there was certainty of improvement. She found her task not as difficult as she expected, for, instead of stupidity and dulness, she found docility and anxiety to learn; and the two eldest of the class were more than ordinarily bright. But the germs of a future harvest must be planted ere a reward can be reaped, many slow and wearisome steps must be taken before the goal is won; and all who would gain the victory which is promised to the followers of the Saviour must contend firmly and patiently with their own weaknesses, prejudices and passions. Margaret Gordon did so, and found her

reward, and had afterward reason to rejoice that she had undertaken the task, for all were steady and consistent; and, when a revival of a most interesting character took place in the church, four of them professed to have yielded their hearts to that reasonable service which is perfect freedom. Two of them died young, and Margaret, long afterward, when bowed down to the borders of the grave with sore affliction, was comforted by the messages sent by those sable pupils from their deathbeds, which told of the peace they enjoyed, and attributed their desire to avail themselves of the offers of mercy to the impressions made by the instructions she had given them in the Sabbath-school.

Her reluctance to the exchange which had been made was by no means lessened by the remarks of her companions and others during the interval of worship, but she was for the most part silent, or, if she answered, did so in a proper spirit. Firmness was a strong feature in her character: she had put her hand to the plough and would not turn back, nor had she the least desire to shrink from her duty. Yet she was not happy when she reached home, and she went to bed with the sense of a burden upon her, but when she opened her Bible to

read a short passage, as was her constant practice before seeking her rest, a never-to-be-forgotten feeling, a sense of "solemn but thrilling happiness," came over her as she read the words, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these, ye have done it unto me;" and, kneeling by her bedside, she prayed that she might be useful in her new vocation, and find happiness in doing the will of Him who gives to all their appropriate work, whether it calls for the exercise of one talent or ten.

It was in school, however, that she was most tried. The "black teacher," as she was nicknamed, was subjected to many mortifications on account of the office she had undertaken; for although there were many good people in the congregation who thought it right that persons of colour should be taught Bible truths, they yet objected to their being "mixed among the white scholars in Sunday-school." Children generally echo the sentiments of their parents, and many breaches of friendship have been made and many grievous quarrels have destroyed the peace of a whole community by their repeating what has been said in the home circle. This was the case now, and serious consequences might have ensued but for the steady consistency of James Gordon and his family. No notice was taken of

any remark which was calculated to wound, no busybody's tale was listened to; pursuing the even tenour of their way, and endeavouring to conform their lives to the gospel rule which enjoins that "ye live in peace with all men," no fuel being added to the flame, the subject was soon exhausted, and after a time, all prejudice being removed, the measure became as popular as it had at first been distasteful.

Margaret, as we have already said, had much to bear with in school, but no one was so hard upon her as her late friend, Kitty Green, who let no opportunity pass unused for unfriendly taunt or wounding sneer; and few that observed the quiet demeanour of the schoolmaster's daughter could have guessed how great was the struggle she was undergoing in maintaining her conquest over self, nor how difficult it was to restrain the hasty and perhaps improper reply, or to keep back the clever but ill-natured retort, which, from her quick temper, came but too readily to her lips. Sometimes, although it was but rarely, when tempted, she uttered them; but the sorrow she felt afterward was its sore punishment, for it made her deeply conscious of her own sinfulness, and humbled her as she recognized her own faults.

Our readers may think that we have dwelt unnecessarily long on the early trials of the schoolmaster's daughter, and count them as very trivial matters. The days of martyrdom are indeed past, but we have no doubt that many a one whose eye may rest on these pages will acknowledge that school-trials are not the least among those trials that leave their impress on the page of memory. School is a miniature world, where the characteristics of maturer life are exhibited, and many there display a picture of what they are to be when called to go forth and face the world; and school may afford opportunity for bearing faithful and unflinching testimony to the great Master's cause, or proving an opposition by ridiculing and mortifying others whose walk is different from their own. But it is by such little trials that the true discipline is involved. "Little things," says Dr. Chalmers, "often bring great things to pass; the large world in which we exist is made up of little particles as small as the sand on the seashore; the vast sea is composed of small drops of water, and a little star shining brightly in a dark night has been the means of saving many a poor sailor from shipwreck. There is nothing trivial in the sight of God, who

can sanctify the small as well as the great events of our lives—those events seemingly of little importance in themselves, but which are yet the seed which are to bring forth harvests of blessing or harvests of sorrow; and it is the little trials of life which form its discipline. They irritate the temper and destroy the equanimity of the mind, just as the continual falling of water-drops, one by one, wears away the solid rock. Pride—sense of wrong—consciousness of the sympathy and pity of others, may assist us to meet great trials and strengthen us to endure great sufferings, but the grace of God is alone sufficient for us in the numberless petty annoyances which continually beset us in the path of daily life. Without it, none is able to endure suffering or has power to resist temptation; and it requires, in the daily life of Christians, constant watchfulness and prayer, lest they give occasion to the unbelieving and unconverted to doubt the truth of their religion and reality of their faith. Such trials as these Margaret was daily called to pass through, but she was learning in God's own school the Christian's part —trying to fulfil.

Doing and suffering are his unquestioned will; and she did not suffer herself to be too much depressed by them, for she had thus early devoted

herself to the service of One who would never forsake her; and what trial could overwhelm her when he was with her? And so her daily life went on, each day freighted with its own burden and amount of toil in the warfare she was constantly waging—namely, the ruling of self. Her warfare—like that of all Christians—was within; and labouring with a fervent spirit, she at length achieved the triumph which glories in

"A crown of never-fading wreaths,
Compared with which the laurels that a Cæsar reaps are weeds."

An opportunity soon occurred which would show whether or not she possessed the calm, enduring principle so necessary in self-discipline—which can endure the shock of sudden temptation and prove that her conquest was genuine. One day, as Kitty Green was about going to school, her father called her to him, and, handing her a paper covered with figures, told her he "wanted her to cypher it out for him before evening," as he was obliged to be from home all day, and expected two men, with whom he had to make some settlements as soon as he returned; adding that he could "look it over and see that it was right—he would have time enough for that." Kitty was frightened. Although quite clever in most of her studies, she was famed for

dullness in all matters of reckoning, and hated arithmetic, often declaring that, as she "never expected to have much use for it, she would not trouble herself with it;" so she mostly got some one of her classmates to do her sums, and cared little that she was deceiving her teacher and her parents. She looked over the document as she went on her way to school, and was dismayed at the magnitude of the task before her; but then the thought that she could get Lizzie Brooks to help her comforted her in a measure. She knew she dared not put off the task or disobey her stern father, and cared little that she was planning a new deception. To her great vexation, she found that Lizzie Brooks was not at school that day. Mary Burton could do it quite as well as Lizzie, but they had had a quarrel and did not speak. The schoolmaster's daughter had helped her the oftenest and was the most reliable, but how could she ask a favour of one whom she felt that she had wronged? She asked assistance from one or two others; they declined, on plea either of having no time or that the task was too troublesome. What was she to do? She feared to return the untouched paper to her father, whose displeasure she dreaded more than anything in the world, for his will was

absolute and brooked no opposition. There was now no alternative but to apply to Margaret. The afternoon was wearing apace. The work must be done by all or any means; so, choking down her mortification and bowing down her pride, she approached Margaret's desk, and, taking possession of Martha Harding's vacant seat, made her request known. A momentary thrill of exultation shot through Margaret's heart, and a bright glow mantled her face as she listened. What caused it? Was it the natural emotion of satisfied pride that she now had it in her power to return evil for evil, and humble, by a refusal, one who, once her friend, had of late shown herself so unfriendly? Her injurer was in her power; she could now repay her for the pain she had so recklessly inflicted. Others, with whom she was on friendly terms, had refused to aid her, and it seemed a piece of arrogance to ask a favour of one whom she taken so much pains to mortify. Margaret was by no means perfect: the light of grace, which was being kindled in her heart, was not yet so clearly discernible as to enable her to decide suddenly, and for a moment she hesitated. The promptings of the natural man were hard to be resisted. Proud and high-spirited by nature, she was only too prone, when occasion of-

fered, to use that ready and natural weapon of self-defence—namely, retaliation. The words of a scornful refusal trembled on her lips, but the watchfulness which for many, many months she had been able to exercise warned her against their use, and the better principle triumphed.

Margaret, who now regularly taught some of the classes in the lower branches, could readily have named want of time as an excuse for refusing. But strength equal to the day was given. With the rapidity of which thought only is capable, memory placed before her the injunctions of the Great Law-giver, which teach of mercy and putting away of malice and wrath, recompensing to no man evil for evil, but rather, practicing the law of kindness, overcome evil with good, and if thine enemy hunger feed him, for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.

The glow of triumph faded from Margaret's cheek, leaving it as pale as usual; she examined the paper and found the task, from the irregular manner of its arrangement, would be somewhat troublesome, but not difficult, as it only involved exercises in compound addition and compound division; and telling Kitty she would do it for her as soon as she had got through with her

little pupils, she left her desk and proceeded to her duty.

She was as good as her word. The straggling figures were brought into order, and the whole finished in plenty of time for Kitty to copy off in her own hand. Her father examined and found it correct. Greatly delighted at her smartness, he praised her as he had never done before, and declared that he would give her anything she asked for. "I knew," he added, "that you could do it after you beat them all at the examination—the schoolmaster's daughter and all the rest."

There is no censure so severe as that contained in the words of unmerited praise. Every one has a conscience, and Kitty had not yet so far advanced in the ways of the world that hers was silent; and now her conscience spoke loudly, piercing her heart with the sharpness of a dagger. She could not look up into her father's face as he praised her. His promise of reward afforded no joy. She was miserable, as all must be who practice deception and transgress the law of God. She went to bed that night with a heavy, burdensome sense of guilt resting upon her. She had a second time deceived her father; but notwithstanding the humiliating and degrading recollection that she had appropriated to

herself the praise that belonged to another, having no fear that she would be found out, she had no idea of relieving her uneasiness by a frank acknowledgment of the truth.

She was conscious that she had acted a falsehood, but she endeavoured to persuade herself that it was nothing more than she had often done before, and was sure everybody else did. But she could not succeed. The goading conscience made her uneasy, and she tried to silence its warning by trying to convince herself that her fault—namely, the double deception she had practiced—was but trifling; and resolved that she would never do so again, and that in future she would treat Margaret better than she had done of late. Poor girl! she did not know, for she had never been told, that no goodness of her own or resolutions of amendment, even if her after life was perfectly blameless, could atone for the smallest sin in the sight of God. Forgiven indeed all may be, even the worst of sinners, for the sake of the Saviour who bore the punishment of all sin; but before this forgiveness can be obtained, there must be the humble acknowledgment of guilt both to God and those we have wronged, if the offence has been against both; but in the pride of her heart, Kitty never once dreamed of such a humiliation. Very differ-

ent was the state of Margaret's mind as she prepared for her nightly rest, for she was enjoying that peace which always follows the fulfilment of high duty; and humbly grateful that through grace she had been enabled to conquer self, her last thought when she laid her head upon her pillow was of the mercy and goodness which had followed her all her life.

CHAPTER IX.

THE ONWARD PATH AND SAD CHANGES.

NOT many days after this occurrence, as Alice Gordon sat alone at her work, she was somewhat startled at the appearance of a visitor, who was no other than Mrs. Green. She entered without knocking, and, after having seated herself in the most unceremonious manner, complained of the heat and found fault with the weather, proceeded to tell what was the business that brought her.

"I've brought you some work, Mrs. Gordon," said she, displaying at the same time a large bundle of muslin; "it's all white seam, and I want it done *immedently* and *purticklar*. Our Kitty is to go home with Mrs. Slimmins—you know she is the Squire's cousin, and has been stayin' with us 'most all summer. She lives down to—well, now, I can't jist mind where, but it's some place not fur from Baltimore. Oh, what makes me forgit the queer name? Anyhow, it's somewhere in Mur'-

land. Well, she won't hear to nothing but that Kitty must go home with her and go to school in her town, where, she says, she will get polished, and set you all right when she comes back."

She stopped a moment, but, finding that Mrs. Gordon did not manifest great astonishment and answered rather indifferently, she went on:

"She is to larn everything at that grand school —to play the pianny and flower muslin. The Squire, he wouldn't give into it at fust; he said she would larn enough at home here; but he thinks now that she is larned out, and knows all that the schoolmaster can teach her. Why, do you know the other day, when he had to go to vandue, he gave her a paper full of figures to cypher out, and he said she figured them out as well as he could have done hisself. He was so pleased, and said as she was so smart she should go home with Cousin Slimmins and larn to play the pianny and flower muslin."

Alice had heard of Kitty's "cypherin'" from Margaret, but, however, did not reply to this speech, but limited her remarks to what concerned the work in hand. Mrs. Green continued her conversation for some time, until she recollected that the supper-time was approaching. Starting up

hastily, she was about to leave as abruptly as she had entered, when, suddenly, as if recollecting something, she turned back and reseated herself.

"What do you think of the news?" she asked, "and what d'ye think they'll do?"

"Who?" asked Alice. "What news? and what do you mean?"

"Why, the Hardings," replied Mrs. Green. "William Harding is dead, you know, and they say he has not left a single red cent."

"Dead?" repeated Alice. "When? how? I had not heard it."

"He died yesterday," was the reply; "and the Squire says there is so much bail-money to pay that everything will have to be sold, and then won't reach. That'll be a come-down when they have to leave the old house. Mrs. Harding held herself very grand with her quality notions, never going to our tea-drinkin's or giving them. She'll have to come down a peg or two now, I guess."

"I am very sorry to hear of their great misfortune," said Alice. "As far as I have been acquainted with Mrs. Harding, I could not say I thought her proud. She stayed very closely at home, indeed, but then she may have had good reasons for doing so."

"She did not care for any but the quality from C——," replied Mrs. Green. "Let's see what they'll do for her now. She'll not take much state upon herself after she leaves the farm. Pride mostly gets a fall, and they'll have a come-down, and it serves them right."

Alice was about to reply, but, recollecting that it would be of no use to reason with a person like Mrs. Green, she suffered her to talk on until she had exhausted the topic. At length she became wearied herself, and, starting up a second time, declaring that the Squire would be ready for his supper, and once more charging Alice to do the "white seam, *immedently* and *purticklar*," she added that she had a couple of "*caliker* frocks" for her to make after she finished the work she had just given her, and then she departed.

The news related by Mrs. Green was unhappily true. The Hardings, in a very few weeks, had to experience the sad realities which so often follow in the steps of death. They had to leave the farm, which had been the family home for many generations, and retire to a cottage, to which was attached a small garden and strip of pasture-land. It belonged to a distant relative of Mrs. Harding, who permitted her to live in it rent free as long as

it suited her. She had many sympathizers, who were not of the spirit of Mrs. Green. But there are two kinds of sympathy—the external and internal: the first gives exactly the amount of pity which the circumstances seem to call for, and is soon exhausted; the other, the real, cordial, internal sympathy, which has the power of throwing itself into the mind, and, instead of giving a lecture on the duty of resignation or on how many comforts the mourner still has left, makes, as it were, the grief its own, "rejoices," as the Scripture enjoins, "with those that do rejoice, and weeps with those that weep." Alice Gordon and her husband were of the class who understood the nature of true sympathy. The humble home, for which the comfortable farm-house had been exchanged, lay in an opposite direction from the old neighbourhood, but was quite near to the schoolmaster's cottage; and, as it was desired by the bereaved family, Alice and her husband went often to see them. One hour's conversation with them was rest and strength for the bereaved family. Comprehending the grief, loneliness and responsibility involved in such a loss, while they acknowledged that it was hard to bear, they soothed the wounded spirits of the mourners as they gently

turned their thoughts from themselves to Him who knew the full extent of the trial, and who would never have sent it but in mercy, and endeavoured to convince them that no one who relied on God for comfort could ever be wholly desolate.

Mrs. Green's work was finished within the specified time, and Margaret was desired to carry it home, and, on her return, deliver a message from her mother to Mrs. Harding, whose cottage she could easily take in her way. Mrs. Green met her at the door and insisted on her entering, which she was not at all disposed to do; but the good-natured mistress of the farm-house would take no denial.

"You must come in, Margaret," she said, "and see Kitty's nice new dresses, which have just come by our carter's boy from the dressmaker's. Kitty ain't to home; she and Cousin Slimmins is gone to a tea-drinking, and won't be in till late. Besides, I have some caliker I want to send to your mother to make up. You may tell her I am pleased with the 'white seam' work, and so I can trust her with the caliker, for Mrs. Fisher charges so high I did not care to give them to her, though she's very good at her trade."

Margaret followed Mrs. Green up stairs into the "spare-room," which was strewn all over with nice

things, and more dresses than Margaret had owned in the whole course of her life.

"Is not this a pretty gingham?" said Mrs. Green, as with great satisfaction she displayed the ample wardrobe. "Now, what do you think them two cost? Just give a guess," she added, as she called Margaret's particular attention to a gaudy Canton crape and purple silk, both very elaborately trimmed, which lay spread out on the bed.

Margaret, who knew little about gay dresses, could not guess. So Mrs. Green named the sum—an amount which amazed her. It was more than she could earn by her labour throughout a whole summer. She did not linger, for she felt not envious, but dissatisfied; and with feelings not at all improved by her short visit to the spare-room, after having received the calico with many charges to be "*purticklar*," she proceeded to execute her further errand.

It was a bright afternoon, and most inviting for a prolonged walk—very warm for the end of September, and yet very invigourating. There were glorious colours on the fading leaves and dancing lights on the boughs of the forest trees under which she passed. Sunshine shone on the broad border of grass by the roadside, and a veil of soft mist

half shrouded the distant hills in indistinctness. All was so lovely and peaceful that Margaret's dissatisfaction gradually yielded to its influence. We have already told our readers that she was ambitious, and had a mistaken notion that riches have a certain miraculous power of buying off all the disagreeable things of life, and that no good was so great as the possession of money. A feeling of discontent had been excited by the display of Kitty Green's finery; and as she thought over the difference in the circumstances of her father and Squire Green, she wondered again and again why the goods of earth were so unequally divided. But this mood did not continue long. The lessons of her pious parents had not been in vain. They had taught her that the days of her childhood were the most important in her life, for they were those in which habits for good or evil were formed which would be her blessing or her curse for ever. She had been told of the first sinful nature which every one brings with them into the world at their birth, and of the second holy nature which is the consequence of the second birth, without which the Scripture tells us no one can see God; and she had also been warned that the whole of the Christian's life was a struggle between the two—a struggle which was begun from

the very first moment of her becoming sensible of the difference between right and wrong. Thus she had learned to look upon what are considered trifling faults in a child—ill-temper, vanity, selfishness, envy and other evil dispositions—as real sins in the sight of God, which must be checked in the very beginning by those who wish to become heirs of heaven. Thus early trained to the task of self-examination, she had learned lately to know something of herself, and that dissatisfaction with the condition in which unerring Wisdom had placed her and a disposition to envy the rich were her besetting sins; but although the wish for wealth and the good things of this world would, as on the present occasion, arise, it was always accompanied by the knowledge that it was wrong, and she would feel sorry and vexed with herself, and she endeavoured to conquer it, and, being sincere in the wish and watchful over self-love, every day the task became less difficult. The kind of education she had received from her home-teaching caused her to be more thoughtful than is usual at her age, and gave her whole demeanour a serious and quiet cast, making her appear much older than she was; but such an education, in reality, adds far more to the happiness than it apparently takes away. It makes

the recipient love the blue sky, the trees and flowers and all the forms of living life, not merely for their wonders and their beauty, but because they are the works of God, and are especial blessings provided and sent for the everyday enjoyment of all who can recognize the mighty Hand which formed them.

There are few who can go abroad amid such beautiful surroundings as those which encompassed Margaret's path and be insensible to the holy ministrations of nature. Softened and subdued, she yielded to the silent influence, and by the time she reached Mrs. Harding's cottage all her previous disquiet was changed to loving trust and childlike submission to the will of Him who has given so much beauty to this sinful earth. Her knock at the door had to be repeated before any one answered the summons, and she was about to retrace her homeward way when it was opened by Martha, who invited her to enter. That something more than usual had occurred was evident, from the state in which she found the family; Mrs. Harding wiped away her tears, which it seemed she could not repress, and tried to give her a cordial reception; Martha's eyes showed traces of recent weeping, and a bright red spot on each cheek told of

present agitation. Two little children were sitting on the floor close to their mother, and, having left their building houses of corn-cobs unfinished, sat gazing up into her face as if trying to understand what was going forward. Margaret, having delivered her message, rose to depart, although urged to remain. She had, she was sure, made her visit at an inconvenient time, and, feeling herself in the way, she therefore soon took her leave.

The cause of their present grief was, however, soon made known by Martha, who accompanied her part of the way home. They were barely outside of the cottage when she rather abruptly said:

"I suppose, Margaret, you wondered to find us in such a state of confusion, but I'll tell you what everybody will soon know—I am going to service."

"You, Martha Harding, going to live out?" repeated Margaret, stopping short in her astonishment. "What will your rich friends say? And will your mother really consent?"

"Mother cannot bear to think of it," replied Martha; "she says it is too great a come-down for the Hardings, and all that troubles me is that she frets so about it."

"But why not rather teach, or learn dress-making, or work with a milliner?" asked Margaret.

"It don't seem right that you should live out, when you have some far-out cousins who are very rich. What will they think when they hear it?"

"We are poor now," said Martha, firmly, "and look at our situation as it is; and, acting for ourselves, are not to be ruled by other people's notions. Mother's rich relations know what she is suffering and how reduced we are, but not one of them, except Mr. Harvey, who is not rich, has sent us the least help; and, this being the case, if they choose to look down upon me because I am making an honest effort to aid my mother, why let them do so. I have only to go straightforward in the prosecution of what seems at present to be my duty, assured that I shall not suffer in the estimation of anybody whose esteem is worth having."

"But living out, Martha dear—one like you; could you not do as well at dress or bonnet-making?" inquired Margaret; "it don't seem to lower one half so much as living out."

"I did think of that," replied Martha, "but the premium asked was so high, and such a length of time required in both, that I could not think of undertaking the task; for we had not the means to pay for the apprenticeship, and how was my mother to live in the mean time, and until I got

into business? And, besides, I have always been accustomed to lead an active life, and I know my health would be ruined by confinement; and then, instead of being a help to mother, I should be a burden. And so, Maggie, I made up my mind to go to service, and that, as there was no possibility of dependence on far-off rich relations, I would look to myself alone, and go forward self-reliant and hopeful, as thousands before me have done."

"But are you engaged, and how did you get the place, and is it a nice one?" was once more asked.

"I have got the place," replied Martha, "and am to go at once. Whether it is a nice one time must show. You know Miss Anne Duncan, in C——, is a relation of mother's? Well, she went with me to the dressmaker's, and concluded that the plan of apprenticeship would not do, but she said she could get me a place, as 'companion,' it was called, but really that of a servant, to an old lady of her acquaintance, who had been a rheumatic cripple for many years. She is very rich and lives in a handsome house; but Cousin Anne says it will not be an easy place, for Miss Marshall requires a great deal of waiting on, and, although a good woman, is very irritable, and I will be much confined. But she is very benevolent, and will pay

me well for my services; and as I am not engaged exactly as a servant, although I am obliged to perform the duties of one, but am to be called a companion, mother has at last consented; and that is what we were talking about when you came. But, we must say 'Good-bye,' now, for I have much to do, and I wish to be with mother until the last minute."

With a warm embrace they parted, and Margaret pursued her homeward way; she could not help wondering at the decision exhibited by Martha, whom she had been in the habit of considering a rather passive character, forgetting that self-reliance and exertion are forced upon thousands by circumstances as untoward as those experienced by the Hardings.

Her path led past the church, which stood lonely and apart from the dwellings of those who every Sunday worshipped there. Its site had been well chosen, for it was placed on the summit of a small eminence, and seemed from its solitary elevation as if keeping watch over the cultivated plains which lay at its foot, and, dotted with farm-houses and cattle, presented a lovely picture, to which the distant mountains formed a frame. A broad and beautiful stream, upon which the sunshine

lay flickering and quivering, like masses of burnished silver, flowed quietly by; a strip of forest surrounded it on three sides, and on the open space, which led to the farmsteads, the graveyard told its tale of warning to the living, admonishing them of that Almighty Power which has the rule over life and death, and shall one day summon the world to judgment. The quaint, old-fashioned church, built in the early days of the colony, composed of rude gray stones, in many places covered with dark moss, was venerable from its antiquity and sacred from its associations. It seemed a marvel why it stood there alone and at such a distance from most of the congregation, for, except at the Sabbath—for very seldom were week-day exercises held there—it "seemed to have no lesson to preach to the poor nor any word of warning to offer to the rich;" the busy stir of life deserted it save on those seven-day intervals; the rude, dark tombstones told their tales of the vanity of all created things to the happy birds and glad insects, but had no daily voice to admonish the thoughtless and reckless of mankind. Yet, when the Sabbath came, it was very solemn to worship there, "hopeful with the hope of heaven," in the calm, bright summer mornings, when dewdrops,

sparkling in the brilliant sunlight, still hung upon the trees and grass, and all the harmonies of Nature accompanied the simple hymn sung by untutored voices, and mingled with the sweet odours exhaled from the forest: the song of birds that teach so plainly God's providence and care, the hum of insects and murmurings of the stream, could not fail to raise the heart above earthly things, and for a space lead to a nearer contemplation of Him who made them all; guiding both day and night in their courses, and making all to subserve for the enjoyment of man, whom he has created and leads forth with daily care and love.

Margaret had for some time been conscious of a weight upon her spirits, which, although she was careful to conceal from her family, she could not hide from herself, or set aside as being a nervous affection proceeding from over-exertion. The state of her father's health had for a long time been a subject of anxiety to her. She had, however, never named her fears to her mother, who, she felt certain, had never noticed the symptoms which had awakened her own solicitude. She had not failed to observe that his hair had grown quite white, his breathing was short and difficult, and that often when in school an expression of pain

would pass over his face, and he would press his hand upon his heart as if to still the oppressive quickness of its violent beatings. What might be the end of all this? Heart disease, she had heard, was always fatal, and if it was heart disease which ailed her father, the worst was to be feared. But he had never complained; she had often wished that he would, for then medical advice might have relieved her anxieties. Margaret Gordon was a good girl—sincere, truthful, conscientious and God-fearing. But there was something more necessary —that change of heart which is the work of the Spirit, and without which the Saviour has declared no one can be truly a child of God, an heir of heaven. Kind-hearted and wishing to do right, she was yet by no means perfect. She had the natural defects which seem inseparable from the good qualities which made her what she was. She did not always speak gently, even to her parents, or conceal her displeasure when her wishes were thwarted; and often intruded her opinions in cases where it was improper for one so young to judge. But so religiously brought up as she was, and most entirely humble, she was the first to see her own faults and acknowledge them. She was well aware that she did not always keep a strict guard over

her own heart. Although naturally of a bright and hoping spirit, at times she gave way to pining and discontent, and her besetting sin was a desire for riches, higher rank in life and advantages which God in his wisdom had seen good to deny her. Much as she had been urged by her father and pastor to yield to the claims of her Creator and Redeemer, and profess her faith by joining the visible Church here below, she had always excused herself on the score of unfitness, and kept putting off the important task until a more convenient season. But latterly a new phase of inward existence had begun to dawn upon her: the first strong impulse to spiritual growth had been felt, and, humble and self-distrusting, she became conscious of the high responsibility which rests upon all who would live rightly and serve God acceptably. We all have fresh starting-points in life granted us from time to time, but there is not one so marked as that which is associated with our first vivid apprehension of the fact that God loves us, and we feel a desire to keep his commandments and be called his children. This apprehension is called by different names, and different degrees of importance are attached to it. But as our business is not to enter into argument but to endeavour to instruct, we will only say, in

the words of another, that one thing is known and acknowledged by all alike—"that to confess such a belief by the lips is one thing and to receive it in the heart another." In the one case it is a mere formula, whilst in the other it becomes the most powerful of motives—the one all-embracing principle which meets every difficulty and temptation in life.

A broad ledge of stonework, which served the congregation for a seat in the interval between the sermons, ran round three sides of the church, and on this Margaret, somewhat wearied by her walk, now sat down to rest. The weight which had lately rested on her spirits was by no means lessened by the conversation she had had with Martha Harding; and, as she contrasted her cheerful submission to a lot so changed as hers to what her own in the same circumstances would have been, she felt her own shortcomings most painfully, and she entered upon the task of self-examination more strictly than she had ever done before. The end and object of life—what was it? The Bible answered her question. It is to love and serve God, that we may enjoy him for ever.

As she sat opposite the open gate of the churchyard and gazed at the worn tombstones, many of

which lay half buried beneath tall grass and weeds, her scrutiny of self was mingled with meditations on the change—written so plain on all things here below—which death would certainly bring to all. What would it bring to her? What had it brought to the hundreds who found a resting-place within that silent city? What had been the great object of their lives? They had passed into the unseen world; their earthly hopes, joys and sorrows had ceased. One thing alone they had carried with them—the memory of the governing principle of their lives. Her reflections carried her forward to the day when the account of those principles would be demanded from all. With some it might have been desire of fame, with more the love of money; with others the impulse of a petty vanity; with many, very many the mere wish to pass life in a round of pleasure, taking no thought of to-morrow; and with a scarcely less number the gratification of a self-indulgent spirit that, wrapt wholly in its own individual concerns, heeded neither the pains nor the pleasures of those among whom they dwelt. Margaret asked herself to which of these classes she belonged. Was she a child of God, or did she love the world better than the law of grace? Did she possess that spirit of holiness, meekness, long-

suffering and forbearance, the signs of that new nature which "after God is created in righteousness and true holiness?" Her conscience answered sincerely, and tears of real repentance flowed from her eyes. They were not the first that she had shed over her own shortcomings. She had been often told of the "exceeding riches of God's grace," and had often experienced his goodness in the affairs of every-day life, but now her tears flowed from a deeper source—a sense of ingratitude to Him by whose death a sinful world might be redeemed. This day was destined to prove a fresh starting-point to the schoolmaster's daughter. She was roused from her sorrowful meditations by the sound of a horse's footsteps, and, hastily drying her eyes, she turned them in the direction from whence they came, but did not know whether to be glad or sorry when she saw that the rider was her pastor, Mr. Upton. He dismounted from his horse, and, finding her ready to pursue her way homeward, remarked that, as their paths were the same for a short distance, he would accompany her to the place where they separated.

"I am glad to have an opportunity of saying a few words to you, Margaret," said he, as he walked beside her, leading his horse by the bridle. "I

cannot often find you alone, and I have a good deal that I have wished to talk over with you, and you must let me be plain with you, as your pastor ought to be. I expected to see you long ago profess your willingness to serve One who has done so much for you, and publicly acknowledge your allegiance in obeying his command by joining in communion with those who profess to be for the Saviour."

Margaret did not answer; her tears were again flowing, and Mr. Upton went on:

"Much, my child, will be required of you, for brought up by such parents as yours, your religious education has not been neglected and the words of Holy Writ have been made familiar to you. And what, in reference to this subject, do they say? 'Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.'"

"But I do not feel that I have had a change of heart," said Margaret, at last, speaking through her tears. "I have thought a great deal lately on the subject, and have been sad and unhappy about it—for how could I go to the communion-table feeling

myself unfit? And I fear also for my own stability, and that I am too young."

"Say rather, Margaret," rejoined Mr. Upton, "that you have not sufficiently realized the greatness of the work before you, and therefore have not summoned sufficient strength of will to perform it. But the claims of your Creator and Redeemer are not to be set aside or trifled with, and it is but fitting that you should enter upon this service in the spring-time of your youth, and give your best days to your best Friend. He never requires more of us than we are able to perform, and he blesses us and helps us in our feeble strivings after holiness if we only strive sincerely, and because it is absolutely impossible that by any obedience of our own we could ever deserve heaven. He assures us that if we will only trust and love him, we shall one day enter upon the inheritance purchased for us by Him who bore the punishment which was our due. Life is given to prepare us for eternity, and the example of Felix is given as a warning of how much importance it is to choose *this day* whom we will serve. There is no neutral ground on which we may stand—no middle world which we may obtain merely by having good wishes. The world loves and cares for its own, but only the children of

God are the heirs of heaven; and do you not wish to own yourself God's child?"

"I do, indeed," answered Margaret; "but I have always thought that before the communion-table could be properly approached one must be conscious of a change of heart. I know that I am sincere in the wish that I had received that change, but every day's experience shows me that I have not, for every day I have a conflict with myself. No one can change their own heart; and that being the case, what then can I do?"

"You have a wish to do right and desire to serve your Maker; that wish is an especial gift of God. You have a habit of outward religion, a heart to love and admire goodness, and a spirit of obedience which leads you to a right discharge of duty toward your parents and others. These are the germs of the holiness of a saint; but they want one thing more in order to the perfection of a Christian character, and they may lead to it.

"What is that?" inquired Margaret.

"The will to make them so. All that we ask in prayer, believing, we shall receive. Ask for the will and it will be granted you. Ask it especially now, at this season; it may be the turning-point of your life. Once gone, it may never return. There

are two roads that lie before every human being. One is the broad road that leads to destruction; the other is the narrow way that leads to life. One of these must be chosen, and it is dangerous to put off deciding, waiting for a day that may never come. Margaret, my child, remember this *world was not meant for delay.*"

The words, so true and so earnest, sank deep into her heart, but she did not answer, and Mr. Upton proceeded:

"You spoke truly when you said you could not change your own heart, for that is the work of the Holy Spirit. But you can break up the fallow ground, and open your heart to receive him. You can 'ask, seek and call.' That is your work—a work which you only can do, and which you must some time do if you ever expect to find salvation. And I pray you to begin now—*now*, before the cares and deceittulness of the world shall choke the good that is in your heart, and render it altogether barren and unfruitful. You say that for some time you have felt sad and oppressed, and feel as if a great burden was resting upon you. Be thankful, Margaret, that it is so. God has disturbed your security in order that you may come to him and find peace in believing. Never give

up the striving until you do find it. Pray constantly that you may be able to perform all the duties of a Christian life, and exercise them with diligence and godly fear; that, by faith, you may give up to him your whole heart and cordially unite your interests with his. This is the first step in the Christian life, and is of vital importance; for, when life's course is ended, is not eternal life the prize?"

"If I could only feel that I was fit," said Margaret. "I have wandering thoughts in church, and cannot always pray as earnestly as I wish. This makes me unhappy, and then I long at times to wait another year."

"Another year would not help you. You might feel just the same at the end of it."

"Shall I, then, never be more fit?" asked Margaret.

"Why should you seek for more than God requires?" said Mr. Upton. "When our Saviour restored the blind and lame, he did not wish them to walk and see a *little* before he made them *quite* whole; but he told them they must have faith—that is, he required a trust in his power and a willingness to be cured; and this, Margaret, is all he asks of you. He asks for no fitness except that

which you have yourself just acknowledged—namely, your need of him. And so do not give way to any more doubts and scruples, but begin the first act of your duty. Religion will be all in all to you, as it is to every one who embraces it with devout earnestness of purpose."

They had by this time reached the place where the roads diverged. Mr. Upton bade her a kind farewell, and, mounting his horse, was soon out of sight. Margaret, anxious that the traces of the tears she shed should be effaced before she appeared before her family, lingered on her way homeward, meditating on her late conversation; and the words, "This world was not meant for delay," rang in her ears like a voice of warning. She was in a most humble mood; and as the memory of childish offences and the sins of advancing years, of passion, pride, selfishness, discontent and sinful longing for the possession of riches and a higher position in life than that in which God's will had placed her, and the long list of ignorances and errors which make the days of our youth a burden even to the most innocent, rose up before her, she resolved that she would no longer delay, and the resolution afforded her great satisfaction. She had also received an earnest injunction to prayer.

This exercise she had always been scrupulous in performing; but, not more earnest than heretofore, it was from this time attuned in a deeper language of the heart as she entreated that she might be made worthy to share worthily in the sacred rite which was so soon to be commemorated.

We have already spoken of her as being decided in purpose and energetic in action, and now that she saw her path of duty so plainly pointed out, she determined to pursue it earnestly and without delay. Self-discipline is the duty of all who would wish to serve God acceptably; this, she had in a measure practiced, and in a measure succeeded; but now, in the enlightenment she had experienced, she was enabled to view herself as she was—a sinner in the sight of God—and, in the sacredness of that Presence, judge herself by the only true standard. How severe such an examination is can only be imagined by those who, in their strict conscientious unsparing of self, determine on living by the Gospel rule: "If any man will serve me, let him take up his cross and follow me;" and the great apostle tell us often of the struggles he had with self, "keeping his spirit in subjection, lest having preached the gospel to others he himself might become a castaway." But although the task of

self-scrutiny and self-discipline is, perhaps, the hardest duty that we can impose upon ourselves, nevertheless, when once the soul is awakened to the consciousness that sin is hateful in the sight of God, there is a kind of stern satisfaction in the resolve to submit to the severe ordeal of self-condemnation, such as one may imagine Brutus to have had when he sat in judgment upon his sons. Those who would walk worthily must be ready to examine themselves, whether they are really in the faith, and prove themselves by the law of truth as laid down in the gospel. Margaret had begun; she had taken the first step—namely, to resolve; but would she be able to continue her hard task, living in a constant sacrifice of self, as all must do who follow Christ, who had sacrificed himself for those who were his enemies, or did she waver? No; her fixedness of purpose was not based upon a presumption of her own strength, but in sincerity and distrust of self, and it is on this sincerity of purpose that God's blessing will always rest. She therefore commended her weakness to the strength of Him who is always ready to aid, praying him to accept her will and give her grace to fulfil that most earnest purpose of her soul. Such seasons are to the inward life seasons of growth, and from

that evening Margaret was conscious that she had gained much, and received an impulse more powerful than that derived from any human stimulus. Constant occupation and constant anxiety, caused by her father's feeble health, formed Margaret's outer life; the inner, seen only by the eye of God, calm and tranquil, was too far above earth to be disturbed by its strivings or its cares. But the contemplation of those subjects which were to exert such an important bearing on her whole existence, both for time and eternity, effected no change in the discharge of her every-day duties, which were performed with the same regularity as ever; but the days which followed were marked by greater quietness and a more evenly balanced temperament, which her parents noticed, but did not comment upon. Great was their joy, however, when they learned her determination; and when they went up to partake of the blessed ordinance together, the feelings of grateful happiness that filled their hearts, as they received the sacred emblems of the Christian's faith as commanded by the Saviour, it would not be easy to find words to describe; it was the foretaste of that heavenly love which is the anticipation, as it will be the fulfilment and perfection, of eternal joy.

And now, as time rolled on in the calm monotony as heretofore, Margaret, although her labours were rather increased than lessened on account of her parent's health, was conscious of a sense of happiness never before experienced. She was now in her sixteenth year, and although much of the merry thoughtlessness of childhood had left her for ever, it had been replaced by a quieter and deeper source of pleasure. We have already mentioned her great love of flowers and enjoyment of Nature's beauty; but now it was not mere external attraction that gave her pleasure: she found a truer and deeper meaning written on all the works of the great Creator than in former years she had been able to see or understand; for these things were not only made to please the eye—they were signs of the love and care of God, and her maturing mind read this spiritual language inscribed everywhere—a language which all may read. But it is only the truly enlightened who can recognize a Father's hand in providing such a home for his creatures. The efforts so early made were now bringing their reward, and Margaret was gradually awakening to the perception that religion adds tenfold to the enjoyment of life, as it takes tenfold from its bitterness. Her ways are indeed ways of pleasantness;

the yoke of Christ is indeed an easy yoke. No words were ever more true. But the "ways" must be entered on betimes; the "yoke" must be submitted to in youth; and happy is it for those who are just beginning life to be persuaded that it is so, and, like Margaret, yield themselves to the service of God, which is the only true freedom.

Dear young reader, who ever gave himself to God in the spring-time of life and repented in the dreary winter of old age? Who ever looked back on the years gone by and grieved that he had been devoted to his Saviour? Who ever lay upon his deathbed, eternity opening before him and the sentence of judgment awaiting him, and did not turn with thankfulness and love unutterable to the remembrance that amidst all his manifold imperfections he had been enabled, whilst his heart was yet untainted by grievous sin, to offer himself, his soul and body, to be a reasonable, holy and lively sacrifice to him who is the Lord of all, and by whose death he was redeemed?

It was a great blessing that Margaret Gordon had thus early chosen the good part which "cannot be taken away;" for it made her happy, although one little cloud, like that which the prophet's servant saw, still rested on her life's horizon—a cloud

caused by her anxiety respecting her father's health But she knew that no one's path is cloudless, and that trouble must sooner or later come to her as it comes to all; and when the future would loom up before her as it often did, she would also think of One who would never forsake her; and what trial could overwhelm when he was with her? Such faith as this is the privilege of every one who is a child of God. Clouds and gloom often shroud his way, but there is a clear, straight, sunshiny path marked out for him, that, like the fiery pillar which directed the steps of wandering Israel, will guide him through the wilderness of life to the rest of the blessed in heaven.

Another year passed by, and the calm monotony of the Gordons' life remained the same. Everything seemed to prosper with them. Their fruit trees in the little lot proved a source of great profit; the large pear tree that spread its branches over the cottage roof never failed its supply, and, to the mind of Margaret, everything seemed to wear a brighter hue. Never had she been so happy. The father had been so much better for many, many months that her fears on his account had at times nearly subsided, and she gave herself up to a calm enjoyment of the many blessings with which she

was surrounded. Never had the field and trees looked so green; never had the songs of birds sounded so sweetly; and, to her who so dearly loved a garden, no employment was so delightful as to work among the bright and beautiful flowers which her own hands had planted there. And the old clematis, with which they had tried to hide the unsightly walls of the cottage, had fulfilled their wish, for, climbing and twining itself everywhere, it shrouded all with its delicate drapery; its blossoms glittered like a snow-shower through the day, and in the night-time its perfume seemed like a breath from Eden. Their happiness was also increased by the security they felt that the little property was now really their own. Only one payment remained to be made, and that, from a late arrangement, would be more easily met than the first. Mrs. James' son-in-law had one day, soon after receiving a payment, made his appearance unexpectedly, and after stating his reasons for desiring to anticipate the last payment, pleading urgent necessity and offering some advantages which were important to James Gordon, he, after some hesitation, suffered himself to be prevailed upon to grant the request. He pitied the man, and although he was a great lover of order and did not

like to have his arrangements disturbed, he resolved on this occasion to depart from his usual rule. A young farmer in the neighborhood, who preferred an easier life than tilling the ground, had sold his farm and had some money to put out on good security, and was only too happy to lend the money to one like James Gordon, whose character for probity, honesty and strict regard for truth was so well known that every one who knew him declared that his word was as good as his bond. He received the money, for which he gave his note, made young Williams happy in the reception, and foreboding nothing from an act done in the spirit of kindness, went back to every-day life with his usual cheerful spirit.

The circumstances of the Hardings and Martha's undertaking a service had furnished frequent subjects of conversation in the neighbourhood, and had also been discussed in the home circle of the Gordons. One evening, after Margaret had returned from C——, where she had met and conversed with Martha, she mentioned having done so, and then, as is usual in such cases, each one had some opinion to give as Margaret detailed such portions of Martha's disclosures as involved no breach of confidence.

"I think that Martha might have found something better to do than going to be a servant," said Mary; "I would not care how hard I had to work at home, but it seems to me to be dreadful to have to be a servant;" which sentiment was echoed by Robert.

"Her motive is a high one," said Mrs. Gordon, "and deserves much praise; and, if she views her present station as a special allotment from Heaven, in the relation she holds to Miss Marshall she may do a great deal of good, not only to the suffering old lady herself, but to the many poor to whom she carries the alms which her mistress regularly sends."

"But, mother," urged Mary, "Miss Marshall keeps other servants, and if Martha's work is only to wait on her, people won't know that. And then she will have to sit at times with those servants, and talk to them, and associate with them and their friends. It is dreadful for such a girl as Martha Harding to have to do this. Oh, mother, you would not like if our Maggie had to go to service."

"Perhaps not," said her mother, "but we have always to do a great many things we do not like, and make the best of what we cannot alter. I might once have considered going to service in the

same light that you do, Mary, but I think very differently now, for I am assured that every event of our lives is through the direct orderings of God's providence; and, although often, as in the case of the Hardings, seemingly severe, are sent in love, but our eyes are blinded and we cannot always see what are his purposes whilst we are passing through those seasons of trial and difficulty. I am convinced, now, that the education that God gives is just the most suitable for the one who receives it, and it is our duty to accept the work, and do it cheerfully, too; for in doing his work we also do his will. And has he not willed Martha Harding's place in Miss Marshall's family? and may not the trial of going to service be made a means of mercy to her? Her religious education has not been much attended to; and now, in a place where she will hear and see nothing but what tends heavenward, she may also learn to look upward for the help and guidance so necessary in the wearisome journey of life, and which the fervent prayer of faith is sure to obtain."

"But, mother," urged Mary, "I know that Miss Marshall is considered very good and is always giving to the poor; but they say, too, that she is awful cross and irritable."

"That may be, Mary, for no one is perfect; but she is a great sufferer, and has passed through sore afflictions," replied the mother. "I do not suppose that Martha has a very easy life, for Miss Marshall must, from her bodily suffering, require much attention, and she will be much confined; but what of that if the discipline she is undergoing is a purpose for her good? Is it not the work which, in great wisdom, has been allotted to her? Cross words, it is said, are meant to make us gentle, and delays teach patience, and care teaches faith, and press of business makes us look out for minutes to give to God, and disappointment is a special messenger to summon our thoughts to heaven. If Martha will now only try to learn God's lesson in them, she may see the time when, in looking back over the life she has passed, she may declare that, if life could be lived over again, and she should be offered her choice of its trials, she would ask for precisely those which had been sent her."

"Mother," said Margaret, "Martha told me that, although Miss Marshall was very irritable, it was because she had so much pain; she had really become attached to her, for, withal, she was so good. The worst part of it was that she was con-

sidered and felt herself to be a servant. She received good wages—enough to make her mother comfortable—but Mrs. Harding could not be reconciled to her remaining in such a position."

James Gordon, weary with his day's work, was lying back in his arm-chair seemingly asleep, but now he aroused himself and took part in the conversation.

"I am sorry," said he, "that Mrs. Harding views the matter in such a wrong light. It is our duty to do the will of God, no matter what is the kind of work to which we are called; and Martha has done right in assuming her present duty as being her definite task, since there was no other one that she could undertake. Circumstances—by which we often mean the providences of God—have put this duty in her way; and if she will only attend to it in a proper spirit, I have no doubt but that in the end she will be able to see that all is for the best. Our first duty, in any change that we may meet with, is resignation to the will of God. One duty brings another; the first begun, a second will follow, and then many more, until they are spread over a wide circle."

"But, father," said Margaret, "we may not always be able to see our duties. I am sure I did

not at first see that it was Martha's duty to go to Miss Marshall, for I think it is lowering her position, as she will be looked upon as one of the servants. If they could only have kept a few fields of their large farm, no matter how poorly they had to live or how hard they worked, it was still better than living out."

"I agree with you, Margaret," replied her father, "that one feels more independent living in their own house than in that of a stranger; but we are not talking of what might have been better, but of present duty—the duty that belongs to Martha's change of position. I know that it must be a great trial to her, but it need not necessarily be a degradation. I trust she will not allow herself to sink to the level of a certain class who go out to perform the menial work of families, and with whom, in a manner, she will be obliged to associate. She may do them good by her conversation and kind behaviour, and secure their goodwill by maintaining her own self-respect, at the same time keeping to the duties of her present sphere, but dignifying it by the conduct proper to the worldly position to which she was born. Worldly forms and distinction of classes exist in every rank of society; and they are unquestionably

right, for they are fully recognized in the Bible; and neither education nor Christian principles require us to overlook these distinctions. Besides, are we not all servants? Do I do not teach for hire, and mother, there, sew for hire? Does not John Brown and Squire Green work for the sake of the reward of their labour? Every one has his separate work to do; but the question is whether it shall be well or ill done. And the Bible points out very clearly how every class is to be content in its proper place: kings and subjects, masters and servants, parents and children, all are ordered to rule or be ruled, and yet again and again spoken of as one—one body, one building—all performing their requisite parts in the completion of the work placed before them. The children of God's family are never without duties—sometimes very hard ones. But I have long ago been taught to feel that to work for him is so great an honour that it makes the meanest task noble; and so, when he has put such a claim before Martha as is this endeavour to aid her mother, it is impossible it should be a degradation, because it is a work of his own appointment. It is ourselves that do or do not make the degradation by the manner in which we perform or neglect our duties. I have

often before spoken to you of the honour of belonging to God's family, and the comfort of feeling that we are trying to fulfil the duties consequent on such a relationship; for, at the same time that we are spoken of as servants working for, waiting, watching for their Lord, a higher blessedness is vouchsafed in the title given us as friends and children."

"I should like to feel that I was always working for God; but I think it is a very hard task to find out exactly what are our duties, for we are often swayed by that which we like best or which seems easiest," said Margaret. "In such a case as Martha's, if left to myself, I should not know how to act."

"You have often read, Margaret, of the mode in which our Indians follow the trail of those whom they are pursuing or seeking, catching at every indication of a path, marking the bent twigs or the half-effaced footsteps on the grass, and even the tiny shred of a dress caught on the brambles. So must we, oftentimes in life, be contented to abide and search in the very spot where we are left for the very faintest indications of the path by which God is leading us to heaven. The *trail* of our duties may often be perplexed and hard to

find, but, if we will but follow the least claim which definitely presents itself, we may be quite sure that the mercy of God—for he never gives us a task which is too difficult for us to accomplish—will soon enlarge our sight and place us in the sphere for which we were intended. Our *positive* duties are often so small and apparently trifling that we neglect them in order to find out those that are better suited to our tastes, and are fretted because the work allotted us is so simple. Our first duty is to be resigned to learn the lessons which the providences of God are always teaching. This done, the second will follow, and so on until we shall find the *trail* of our duties, and then, if we will follow it earnestly, believing that in doing so we are doing God's will, we will find the path grow plain every day, and at last pursue it, leaning upon him rather than trusting to human help, he will bring us at last safely and quietly to the end."

"Then, father," said Mary, "you think that it ought to be no trial to Martha Harding to go to service?"

"I did not say so," replied her father, "but it was the first really hard duty she has been called to. Every other path seemed closed to her; this

one seemed to be opened by Providence. Tell me, disqualified as she feels herself for every other occupation by which she could maintain herself and aid her mother, do you not think she would have been wrong to let pride stand in the way to prevent her from entering on what seemed to be her first duty? Do you not remember that we were not long since reading of Naaman the Syrian, who, when told to wash in the waters of Jordan, turned 'and went away in a rage,' because he considered it a degradation? It was humbling to his pride to be commanded to do such a simple thing; if 'the prophet had bidden him to do some great thing,' no matter how difficult or at what cost, he would have obeyed; but in his refusal to perform that one simple duty, he was near losing the blessing he most desired."

No more was spoken for some minutes; the silence was then broken by Mary, who was as yet but half convinced, by saying:

"If I was in Mrs. Harding's or Martha's place, I never could forgive that Mr. Brandon for ruining them. I could never forget for a minute that it was his fault that Martha has to go out to service."

"It would not be so hard to forgive if one could altogether forget," said Robert; "but I heard Uncle

John say, the other day, that Mr. Brandon did not intend to cheat the Hardings. He lost all he had, too, and is as poor now as anybody; just working at anything he can find to do."

"I am sorry, Mary, to find you so hard to be convinced, and disposed to cherish an unforgiving spirit. It would be easy for us to forgive any or every injury if we could forget. But we are not told to forget, if by forgetting is meant that no offence has been committed. In such a case as the Hardings' it would be impossible to forget; yet it would be bad to allow themselves to dwell upon the wrong, for then how could they hope that God would forgive their sins? There is but one way, however, of answering this question: God only can make rules and conditions which we are bound to obey, for he alone is perfect; and he has said, 'If thy brother trespass against thee rebuke him, and if he repent forgive him.' But even if there is no repentance shown, and we are unable to forget the wrong, we are not the less obliged to forgive fully and freely; not 'seven times only, but seventy times seven.'"

Margaret had remained for the most part silent, but she had been an attentive listener; leaning her head upon her hand and looking up into her

father's face, she did not lose a single word of what he taught the little group before him, but, like Mary, she "kept all the sayings and pondered them in her heart;" secretly treasuring them there until a time should come when there might be need to bring them forth. Life was to her becoming very serious and anxious; a burden which nothing could altogether relieve, caused by anxiety respecting her father's health, always weighing upon her heart, and a secret feeling which whispered that "days of mourning were at hand," saddened and gave her a look of maturity which did not belong to her years; and she devoted herself to aid and serve him in every way that could most conduce to his comfort. She worked harder than ever this summer, and regulated her whole conduct by a steady watchfulness; so that she would not have, in thought, word or deed, to lay up one memory of self-reproach to add to the coming sorrow. Prayer was her pleasantest task—prayer was her only comfort; and whilst she entreated that her best rest might be found in the assurance of heavenly love, most fervent were her petitions that her father might be spared for many years, to bless and guide them by his wise and pious counsels now when life's opening way made his guidance so important.

CHAPTER X.

DEATH IN THE COTTAGE.

"BOAST not thyself of to-morrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth," are words of mournful import, and many a sorrowful heart has acknowledged the truth of the saying; for how many have been stricken to the earth just when most confident of bliss! It is wonderful, too, that there is not more attention paid to their meaning, for no one is "so happy or so confident in his happiness that he has nothing to fear." The winter had passed away, and the spring—that beautiful season which those who accustom themselves to read the truths of religion in the silent language of Nature, cannot but view as the type of the "Resurrection morning—the spring-time of eternity," when the treasures lost on earth shall be received again—had come and found the circumstances of the Gordons unchanged; contented and industrious, they enjoyed a quiet and subdued happiness; none, unless it might be Margaret at times,

dreading that they were soon to experience the truth of the wise saying with which we have begun our chapter. No one of the family, not even the thoughtful mother, apprehended that anything more than the disability consequent on James Gordon's crippled state ailed him, for he seldom complained and never neglected his duties. Margaret, who never had mentioned her fears to her mother for fear of alarming her, had, however, once spoken to "Uncle John," and asked if he had noticed anything particular as to her father's health. John Brown was too honest to deceive; he told her he had observed the same symptoms which had awakened her solicitude, but also told her that he did not think there was any need of alarm. He added that he had, some months ago, taken James Gordon to C—— in his carryall, and they went together to Dr. Harrison, who told him he had a disease of the heart; that there was no immediate danger to be apprehended—he might live for many years, and die of some other sickness at last. This, in a measure, allayed Margaret's fears; and, as for many months after the conversation recorded in our last chapter, her father had seemed to be so much better, she had half dismissed her uneasiness, and gave herself up to a hope that there was no danger

to dread. The summer was coming, and with it would come the vacation. The doctor had spoken of rest as being beneficial; he could have rest then, and when the school reopened she resolved to take the largest share of the work upon herself; she was now seventeen and strong and well-grown; and with a *will* and energy of purpose peculiarly her own, she felt herself able to perform the task she intended, and her hoping spirit led her to anticipate the time as not far distant when the patrons of the school would admit her competency to teach, and then she could relieve her father altogether. The summer came—bright, beautiful summer—with the birds singing and the flowers blooming, filling the air with their sweet perfume, and with the rest it brought he still seemed to improve. The vacation was nearly over, and the school would soon recommence.

Nothing had disturbed the peaceful life of the inhabitants of the cottage; they looked forward hopefully into the future, for, as James Gordon's health had been for months so much better, it would have been difficult for them to realize the danger that was approaching. He had lived much in the open air, and it had produced a most beneficial change. He was stronger, and declared himself better able to

attend to the duties of his school than he had been for a year previous; and although sometimes that expression of sharp pain which never escaped Margaret's notice, which the others had not seemed to observe, would pass over his face and leave him faint, it was only at intervals, with long spaces between. He was so calm, so quiet, so cheerful that it was not to be wondered at that the stream of their happiness flowed on pure and glad as the mountain rill, long hidden by obstructions, glitters brightly in the restored sunlight. The sword suspended by a single hair above their heads was, however, ready to fall. One Sunday, a short time before the end of the vacation, they all went up together to the old church where they were accustomed to worship, to perform the all-important work of prayer and praise—to hear the word of God—to feed upon the bread of life. It was a lovely day; the sky was calm and serene; all sounds were hushed in the breathing repose of Nature. No reapers were in the half-shorn fields, no merry cow-boy's whistle was heard. All rural labour was at rest, and in the sacred quiet that reigned around it might have seemed that the motionless clouds, the blue vault, the fragrant air and the still earth were all united together in one sweet spirit of devotion. The scene

was beautiful, and deepened in interest as group after group was seen advancing on different paths toward the church, in front of which they met and exchanged friendly greetings; and, coming from all quarters, seemed to represent the effect produced by the voice of "the Good Shepherd calling his sheep from every part of the wilderness into his fold." Most of the assembling congregation came on foot, some on horseback, and a few aged or invalid in rude carriages, but no haughty equipage swept haughtily by to mark the contrast between the rich and the poor. A distinction of rank was, however, visible, but it seemed to be softened down in this rustic community by one pervading spirit of humble Christianity into an admitted brotherhood. All seemed to meet together in mutual acknowledgment that the Lord is Maker of all—that all are alike dependent creatures, looking up to one common Father for the supply of all their wants, temporal as well as spiritual. Proceeding thus to the house of God, they took their seats in silent reverence; a psalm of the old-fashioned version was given out and sung by untutored voices, and although unaccompanied by a well-trained choir or pealing organ, the rude melody mingled sweetly with the harmonies of Nature, and was echoed from the forest and

the valley to which the sounds had reached. It had been a happy day for the schoolmaster's family, for their father had gone to church, and said that he was better than he had been for many weeks, was less fatigued by the walk than usual, and said, too, that he had found that Sabbath a season of peculiar refreshing both to mind and body, and declared—using the words of another—that to him Sabbath days were—

"Types of eternal rest—fair buds of bliss,
In heavenly flowers unfolding week by week;
The next world's gladness imaged forth in this—
Days of whose worth the Christian heart may speak.

"Days fixed by man for intercourse with dust,
To raise our thoughts and purify our powers;
Periods appointed to renew our trust—
A gleam of glory after six days' showers.

"Foretastes of heaven on earth—pledges of joy—
Surpassing fancy's flight and fiction's story;
The preludes of a feast that cannot cloy,
And the bright outcourts of eternal glory."

The evening came on, calm and beautiful, typifying the repose which awaits the believer at the close of life, when the burden and heat of the day are ended and the hour of rest has come. Very lovely was the scene around the cottage, and, as

it lay spread out in holy quiet and bathed in the silvery moonlight, it invited the soul to sweet and solemn meditation. The shadows cast by the trees lay motionless on the ground; the dim, distant outline of the fields, the fringed border of the dark forest, while here and there a cottage chimney rose visibly in the clear light, added to the solemn beauty of that Sabbath eve. No sound disturbed the universal hush save the soft whispers of the evening breeze that played through the branches and wafted the perfume of the flowers through the open window. The pale yet vivid rays of a glorious moon shone into the apartment, from whence the lamp had been removed, and as they fell sparkling upon the waters of the little streamlet in front of the cottage, beamed emblems of the bright glances of life and hope. The family, together with John Brown and his wife, were assembled in the little room where James Gordon was resting in his arm-chair, conversing on the things pertaining to spiritual life, which nourish the soul into strength or prepare it for coming conflicts. They spoke, too, of the goodness and the love of God and the wonders of the Christian's faith, which opens the door of the invisible world, and makes the present and the things of the present to vanish from the sight,

and eternity and the things of eternity to be all in all.

"What a blessed thing it is to believe!" said James Gordon; "for when God gives peace, who can take it from us?"

"No one," answered John Brown; "for we are told that 'neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.' But what is the matter?" he asked suddenly, interrupting himself and approaching quite close to James Gordon, as with a convulsive movement he started from his chair and fell back again. "Are you ill? Are you worse?"

The schoolmaster made no reply, but put his hand over his heart. All present started up in alarm, but at that moment a cloud passed over the moon, and, shrouding the room in darkness, they could not see his face. Aunt Hannah went for the lamp, and, as she entered with it, the moon broke forth again, but it shone on the calm face of the dead. Alice was a widow, and her children were fatherless!

It is said that death, whenever it comes, is sud-

den—a shock always stunning, always overwhelming; but those to whose hearths it comes slowly, preceded by long sickness, pain and the anguish of suspense, have little to suffer in comparison with what those feel when the work of the destroyer is done in a moment—when one hour makes the home desolate, severs the ties of years and fills the heart with despair. Even when, after long suffering, the beloved one is removed from the domestic circle to the narrow grave, or when a long period of tedious sickness, calling for unremitting attention from increased affection, partially prepares for the final separation, the last dread change, death is often agonizing to the survivors; but when the blow falls suddenly, as it did in the case of the Gordons, oh who may speak of the agony such a death brings! And when, added to the deep sorrow within, comes the fear of the future without, the worldly thoughts and worldly cares that will intrude, even in the bitterest and most sacred grief—when that loss brings inevitably with it the evils of poverty—then how doubly intense is the sense of anguish!

James Gordon had been highly respected by all who knew him; friends and acquaintances had learned to think his advice necessary, and that,

without his judgment, difficulties could not be arranged satisfactorily; and his quiet course of Christian consistency had won the highest regard of his rustic neighbours. He was followed to his last home with great regret and every testimonial of respect; and those who knew him best prayed that, when their summons should come, they also, like him, might have made their peace with God.

CHAPTER XI.

SQUIRE GREEN AND BROWN LIZZIE.

THERE was deep sorrow in the cottage of the Gordons—a darkness as of earth when the gladness of sunshine has departed—"a stillness of desolation as when the whirlwind has passed by, and we sit alone to gaze upon the ruin it has made." No sound of loud wailing broke the solemn stillness; their sorrow was silent and profound, but it was the sorrow of those who had learned in all things, whether small or great, to behold the hand of a God of love. Could the faith, the truth by which they had lived so many years desert them now, or fail to bestow the support and consolation so greatly needed in this deep affliction? No; they looked up to God and rejoiced that the death of their beloved one had been so blessed and so peaceful. The words he had spoken on that last Sabbath of his life came to them again and again as soothing balm, of which neither time nor circumstances could deprive them, although years must

pass ere the loss they had sustained would lose its pang, or they should grow accustomed to the absence of one to whom they had always looked for guidance and support.

It has been said, and truly, too, that the poor have no time for sorrow. The rich can afford to indulge in the luxury of grief, but the poor, no matter how sharp the anguish attendant on their loss, have hardly time to hide their beloved dead in the cold, damp grave until they must resume the labour which daily wants make necessary. The schoolmaster's family had always been accustomed to labour, and were ready to do so still, but there were now great anxieties respecting their future, which would painfully intrude themselves even in the first hours of their grief. Their home was not altogether paid for, but while their father lived they had no uneasiness on that account, for, with his salary at the end of the year and the fruits of their united labour, the demand would be readily met. It was different now: greatly would they miss their father's earnings; and, although they would continue their own exertions and use every means that prudence or economy might suggest, it was impossible that they could pay off the claim at the specified time. They were anxious, indeed, but

not really alarmed. Their creditor, they knew, was likely to be a patient one, for he had said that he preferred leaving the money invested in the little property to having it himself.

The shock which Alice had so unexpectedly received was, notwithstanding her steady faith, almost overpowering, and it is not to be wondered at that, when the funeral was over and she returned to her desolated home, her strength and courage failed, and that for a time she gave way to a tide of passionate grief, to which her quiet and subdued character had hitherto been a stranger, seemingly unconscious or heedless of the efforts made to console her. This depth of grief, however, could not continue long; she had borne trials, cares and sorrows, as all her fellow-mortals have to do, but her burden had ever been cast upon Him who had promised to sustain her; and now, although in the bewilderment of her sorrow lost sight of for a moment, her confidence returned, and she became calmly submissive to the decree of him who had seen good to try her faith in the ordeal of such a bitter sorrow.

Troubles are said never to come singly; one follows in the train of another. An epidemic fever had broken out in the neighbourhood and entered

into the household of the Gordons. The mother's health was never very strong, and the burden of grief and anxiety proved too great for her exhausted frame and made her a fit subject for sickness. In less than a fortnight after her husband's death she was laid on a bed of suffering, which for the first few days, during the violence of the fever, her afflicted family believed would prove also one of death. They were however spared this trial. The attack of fever, although violent and severe, was brief, but it left her in a state of long and painful convalescence, which required the most devoted attention of her children. It is in circumstances like these that a great effect is had upon the character of the young: as the sharp blow struck upon the rock discloses the rich and secret treasures of the mine, so it is that those who are afterward to perform hard or high duties, by some incident or blow of misfortune seem to step from almost childhood to the threshold of maturity. We have spoken of Margaret Gordon as being thoughtful beyond her years, conscientious in action, resolute in battling with and conquering self, and dutiful and obedient to her parents. It was not at all surprising that she was what we have described her; brought up as she had been, her thoughts had ever been be-

yond her years, partly from the superiority of her mind, even in childhood, and partly because she had lived almost entirely in the society of her parents, and always employed in the grave pursuits belonging to older persons, she had associated but little with companions of her own age. But now, this great woe, her father's death, her mother's feebleness likely to be protracted to an indefinite time, the care of a blind brother and young sister, and the dread of having to leave the cottage because of the unpaid debt, aroused her to some sense of responsibility imposed by this sudden change, making every previous trial light in comparison with the present, and she trembled to contemplate the future. And yet Margaret's was no solitary trial. Hundreds on earth must at that time have been passing through the same sad experience. Life has hard lessons for all to learn, and it is happy for those who know where to go, as Margaret did—to the foot of the cross—the place from whence no true supplicant is never sent away unheard. She found her only relief from the burden that rested so heavily upon her in prayer. She prayed often and earnestly for strength and guidance in the path of duty, and that wisdom and patience might be vouchsafed to enable her to face life in its new aspect, and meet its

new claims in the spirit of a true Christian. Prayer always brings comfort, and Margaret felt its soothing efficacy. Assured that she would not be forsaken, she suppressed her sorrow and awoke to a consciousness of power and strength. In this great crisis there came to her the wisdom and forethought that had until now lain half dormant in her nature; and although at times still sensitive and shrinking, she became a woman—one conscious that life is given for a great purpose—gentle and strong, meek and fearless, patient to endure, heroic to act. Silently and perseveringly she endeavoured to soften her mother's sufferings; and wearing a face of cheerfulness while her heart was oppressed with a burden not only of grief, but of responsibility, she took sole charge of the household concerns, arranging everything with a view to future circumstances, but above all, indicating a submission to the will of God by example as well as encouraging words. The unwonted energy and resolution which she afterward had to use, and now, for the first time in her life, assumed, were not without their effect. Robert and Mary looked up to her for advice, and rendered the same obedience as they would have done to their mother; and even the forlorn widow experienced a lessening of her grief as she read courage and hope in every

feature of Margaret's face. How little they thought that whilst thus cheering others, she was a prey to anxiety and herself grieving in silence! She could not bear that her mother's necessary comforts should be diminished, but then there was the debt, the discharge of which seemed every day to grow more difficult. Night and day it weighed upon her spirit. She formed plan after plan in secret, for she told few of them to her mother, fearing to pain her, for the most of them carried out would involve a separation which in her present state of health she dare not propose. So she bore the burden in silence, and many a fear and many a prayer passed through her heart in the hours when her aching head rested on a pillow now unfamiliar with sleep. She had, however, the satisfaction of seeing her mother gradually returning to old habits and old ways; and her bright and hoping mind, always looking out for "the silver lining of the cloud," looked forward to the future, when holy calm and sweet and solemn peace should come in place of this wasting grief, and the mourner would go back to the outer world and concerns of common life, performing the duties which God requires of every one in proportion to the talents bestowed. This improvement, slight as it was, afforded her great relief, and urged her

to further effort in her labour of love. Although she had no certain prospect of how their livelihood was to be obtained, and the consequent anxiety was most wearing to her own spirits, she had still words of cheering and comfort for her mother, and for herself the blessed privilege of kneeling in her own humble chamber and telling her troubles to One who is always near and ever ready to listen to them.

"Mother," said Margaret one day, when Alice was so far recovered as to be able to sit up and sew, "do you know that I have applied for father's school, and have quite a prospect that I shall get it? So cheer up; we shall be able to live and keep our home too."

Alice looked up amazed, but did not speak, and Margaret continued: "I always wished to be a teacher, and a good teacher too, and that aim, under the blessing of God, it is my fixed purpose to reach. I feel that I ought to be earning something, for the debt must be paid; and, as no one has as yet applied for the school, and it seemed an opening, I summoned up courage and spoke to Uncle John and Mr. Upton about it. They both approved and promised to interest themselves with the trustees, and both have since told me that everything looked

favourable. There will be no difficulty, Mr. Upton thinks, except with Squire Green. I do not know why he should be the only one to object, for he knows better than all the others that I can teach, and helped father so much."

"They may think you too young for this school," said her mother, "but since the effort must be made, it is best to try at once what can be done."

"I mentioned that to Mr. Upton," said Margaret; "but he said, although I was very young, that was an objection which would lessen every day; and as I could go on with father's plan of teaching and the scholars knew me so well, my age need not be a very serious objection. He said I ought to go to Squire Green myself, but as I do not think I have courage enough to face him alone, he said he would go with me."

The first smile that had passed over the face of Alice Gordon for weeks was now visible, and that smile was very dear to Margaret's heart, for it told of renewed hope; and hope, she had heard, was the best physician. But her answer was grave, as she acknowledged that it would indeed be providential if Margaret could get the school. But whilst she approved of her forethought and courage as exemplified in making the application, she bade her not

to be too sanguine. "Remember, Margaret," said she, "it often requires as much resolution to bear disappointments as to make efforts."

The truth of this assertion became painfully apparent when days passed and no answer came. Every knock at the door made her heart tremble; but even when a whole week passed by, she did not give up hoping. Ah! she did not know all the difficulties atttendant on efforts to make a living. She went to Squire Green; he did not give her a downright refusal, but said he would think about it and let her know. He "thought she was too young to be stiddy enough, and though she had did very well in helping her father, she had failed once entirely at examination, and he was afeared she was not fit to teach such a school as theirs."

She repressed the angry reply that rose to her lips as she recollected the cause of her failure, and answered mildly that, although young, she fully understood her father's mode of teaching, and felt herself able to accomplish the proposed task. Squire Green did not listen, but turned away abruptly, saying that the matter would soon be decided. And so it was: in a few days it was known that the school had been given to an overgrown damsel, a near relative of Squire Green's, whose

rule, totally different from that exercised by James Gordon, caused great dissatisfaction to the parents and raised a spirit of insubordination among the scholars. Margaret bore the announcement bravely. She was one of those whose spirit rises on meeting difficulties. She neither wept nor complained, although she felt the disappointment in the innermost depths of her heart, but resolutely set herself to contemplate a new undertaking. Again a path was in sight. Two other district schools at no great distance were without teachers, and some one happening to mention it in Margaret's hearing, she resolved to propose herself. The being obliged to be from home where she was so much needed was an objection; but she must be earning something, and with a new alacrity, observable in every motion, she began her task. She thought it best at this time to make application in writing, in which, as we before stated, she was a proficient, and therefore penned two notes with the greatest care and exactness, so that it might be seen that the new candidate could at least write and spell correctly. These were sent, and with varied feelings she awaited an answer. In a few days the first came—an abrupt, rudely-worded epistle, containing a refusal—the objections the same as those urged by Squire Green.

Perhaps he had been at work there; but her mother would not admit the supposition. "They had never," she said, "done anything to provoke his enmity, and it was wrong to judge unkindly." The second also arrived, bearing tidings of disappointment; but, kindly worded, it did not fall so painfully upon the heart. "The character of her father both as a teacher and citizen was well known to the committee, and she could have had the school, but her application had come too late; the place was filled."

As Margaret read the letter aloud she saw her mother's pale cheek grow paler and her hands tremble so that she could not sew.

"You have done all you can, daughter," said she, "and I cannot see that we can do anything but sell the house, which I cannot bear to think of. Since your father is no longer here to help us, we cannot expect to pay off the debt by our little marketing and labour. I have no hope. We will have to let our home pass into the hands of strangers, and content ourselves barely to earn food."

"No, mother, we will neither give up our home nor want," replied Margaret, her slight form dilating with the earnestness of her manner as she drew herself up to her full height. "I can do

other things than teach school. Don't you remember how often father said, when we were trying to do something difficult and grew impatient if we did not readily succeed, that 'where there is a will there is a way?' Now, mother, I have a *will*, a courageous one, and never fear but that I will make a way."

"What can you do, Margaret?" inquired her mother. "Our way seems hedged up on all sides."

"Many things," was the reply. "I can go among the farmers and sew by the week, or even do housework if I cannot get anything else. In the mean time we can be content with little until the debt is paid; and, mother dear, times are not darker than they were on that stormy day when Mr. Berkly came to tell father about the school. How well I remember it, and what father said about faith, and how God often sent help by means most unexpected!"

New comfort dawned upon the widow's heart, borrowed from the hoping spirit of the child, who now promised to be her stay and support; and it seemed strange that one who had been so long accustomed to look to her for advice and assistance should now be able to give her the counsel and strength she so much needed.

Before Margaret had had time to enter upon any new course of action, an incident occurred which gave quite a different turn to their affairs. A day or two after the conversation just related had taken place, as Alice sat alone at her sewing, she was surprised at receiving a visit from Squire Green. Mary and Robert had gone to the carding-mill—for they had some sheep of their own—and Margaret was busy in the garden, and she was not a little startled at the prospect of an interview with her formidable neighbour. His errand was soon made known. After condoling with her on her great loss and late illness in those stereotyped phrases which fall painfully rather than soothingly on the ear of grief, he handed her a soiled piece of paper which he took from a greasy-looking pocket-book, and proceeded to tell what brought him there.

"I s'pose you know, Mrs. Gordon," said he, as Alice looked over the paper, "that the schoolmaster borry'd the money from Farmer Smith to make that last payment. Well, he's been speculatin' lately—makin' ducks and drakes of his money—and got into a hobble, and was glad to sell the note of hand to me, so now you are in my debt, 'stead of his. There, you can see it all figured out

in black and white, and that the time for payin' off is jist about up."

"I know it," said Alice; "and only for our great trouble and my sore sickness it would have been paid at the promised time. But funeral expenses and doctors' bills are very heavy, and I am unable to pay the debt just now."

"But I be to have the money at once—can't afford to wait," said Squire Green. "I have boughten a bit of land off the Harding farm for sake of the wood. I need it for to carry on the 'stillery, and they've been cravin' me for the price, and I am sure you cannot expect me to let myself be pushed when I've money comin' to me."

"I should be sorry," said Alice, "that you should have the least trouble on our account; but you need not fear that you will lose your money. As soon as my brother-in-law returns, I will get the money for you."

"He has been gone for months, I hear," was the answer. "Like as not he'll never come back; and if he does it will still be borry'd money, and I don't see as how, with jist your sewin' and gardenin', you're ever to pay it. No; the best thing you can do is to sell the house. I wouldn't keer to buy it myself and pay off the debt. It's a ter-

rible thing, debt is. Then your next best plan would be to rent a couple of rooms somewhere, and you could go on with your sewin'. Robert, to be sure, could not do much, but the girls could live out, for help is so much wanted; and so you could get along nicely."

Alice, weakened by sickness and grief, knew not how to answer. She tried to speak, but the utterance of words was choked by tears. After a few moments of silence, Squire Green went on.

"I don't like to be too hard," said he, "but I want money badly. I've had very bad luck with my cattle lately: two of my best cows died, and I'm lookin' round for some good ones to buy. Now, I'll tell you what I'll do for you. You've got a fine cow and some nice pigs: my wife has often said she'd give anything to have jist sich a cow, so I'll take the cow and pigs at a fair price, and agree to wait a month or so for the rest of the money."

Alice now found words, and, wiping away her tears, said, "Mr. Green, have you considered that we depend on the milk of our cow and our barnyard stock almost entirely for our living? How, then, are we to live this coming winter if we part with our cow and pigs?"

"Oh, you have near neighbours, and they will give you milk enough. It's only a step to Brown's, and they have half a-dozen cows;" and, as he spoke, he arose with the air of one who has concluded a bargain with which he is well satisfied, and took his departure without waiting to hear Alice's reply. He might have waited a long time, for she had not heard half of his last speech. The unlooked-for visit, the startling facts and propositions were too much for her weakened frame; and when Margaret came in an hour afterward, she found her lying on her bed in a high fever and talking incoherently. Greatly alarmed, she ran for Aunt Hannah, who advised that Dr. Harrison should be sent for. He came—wondered at the suddenness and violence of the attack. Could it be the effect of over-exertion? or had anything uncommon occurred to occasion a sudden shock? He advised rest and quiet, and said that he hoped that with great care they could bring her round in a few days.

Margaret sat all night at her mother's bedside, listening anxiously to the murmurs that broke through the veil of her dreams, but could gather nothing to throw light on what had caused this sudden illness. On the evening of the second day,

however, she was so far recovered as to tell what had occurred, and expressed her dread of Squire Green insisting on taking the cow.

"He shall not take Brown Lizzie, mother dear," said Margaret; "so give yourself no further trouble on that subject;" and, leaving Mary to take her place as nurse, she ran over to tell the Browns what had happened, and ask advice. Uncle John was not at home; he had gone to Philadelphia market that morning, and would not be home for two days. Aunt Hannah bade her "keep a good heart; Squire Green would surely not take the cow without saying something more about it; at any rate, not before her good man got home."

Margaret and her mother were not so sure; they started at every little noise, and looked anxiously from the windows; but Brown Lizzie, unconscious of danger, with her large, mild eyes and hairy, featureless face, was still in quiet possession of her own premises. Two days passed, and Margaret began to think that her mother's fears had led her to magnify the danger, and she began to breathe more freely. On the third morning, however, Alice, who was much better, was awakened by sounds from the barnyard which indicated that an angry discussion was going forward. The voices

of Robert and Mary, heard in loud remonstrance, were mingled with the gruff tones of a man, who seemed to be doing something that displeased them. Forgetting her weakness, she started from her bed, and, looking out of the window, the scene without at once explained the cause of the uproar. Squire Green's man was placing a halter round the cow's neck, in order to lead her away, in spite of all that Mary and Robert could say; he had his "ordhers," and must do as he was bid. The voices were silenced for a moment as she reached the window, and her heart was gladdened when she saw the reason. John Brown and Margaret had just reached the spot, and at once stopped the proceeding.

"Why, Peter Murphy," said the good man, "what does this mean? What are you doing with the widow's cow?"

"Sure, thin, I'm only doing as the masther bid me," said Peter, "for it's not myself that has any call to the widdy's cow. I was just tould to fetch the halther and bring her away, an' that's all I have to do wid it."

"Just take the halter off the cow's neck, Peter," said John Brown, "and leave her where she is."

"An' thin," asked Peter, "what'll I do at all, at

all? The masther bids me do one thing and you bid me do another, Mr. Brown; I'm but a poor man, an' if I go back to the Squire widout the cow, he'll turn me away, an' that'll be the bad job. An' sure, if he's bought the cow, why should I lave her, when he sint me to fetch her?"

"He has not bought the cow, Peter; I will go over with you and settle the matter with him. If he turns you away, I will find you a good place or employ you myself; so do not be uneasy, but take off the halter and go home."

"An' will you give me work, yourself?" asked Peter, as he untied the rope from Brown Lizzie's neck; "sure, thin, it's the good turn you'll be doing me, for the Squire is a very *rapacious* man, an' it's glad I'll be to lave him. An' I'm glad, too, that the baste is to stay, for it's not myself that would *mislist* the widdy's cow, barrin' that being a poor man I must just do as I am bid."

The two departed, leaving Margaret to carry the good news to her mother, while Mary and Robert remained to caress and feed their dumb favourite, who testified her satisfaction at the favourable turn things had taken by a gentle "moo!"

It was not long until John Brown returned. "Here, Mrs. Gordon," said he, as he handed her a

soiled paper, which she recognized as the one Squire Green had shown her, "you can burn this if you like: it and the cow are your own now; you had best destroy it at once. You are not in anybody's debt now but mine, and you can pay it as it suits, and keep your home."

"Uncle John," said Margaret, "you have paid that debt for us at a great sacrifice to yourself. You have been saving money for some time to build an addition to your house, and Aunt Hannah has been wanting a new carpet, and now you will have to do without, because you have been so good to us."

"What's a carpet, or building of a room or two, to the turning of a whole family out of their home and destroying the labour of years?" said John Brown. "The house will do very well for a while yet; it would be well if everybody had as good a one. But I am hungry, and must go home to my breakfast; for, if anything *can* put Aunt Hannah out, it is having a meal spoiled by waiting."

And so, under the plea of wanting his breakfast, but in reality to escape from the overflow of thanks which would have been showered upon him, he hastened homeward, leaving Margaret and her mother to feel that God never forsakes those who

trust him, and to acknowledge that the events of this day had shown them that there is no night of sorrow so dark to which there will not come sooner or later a bright and happy morning.

CHAPTER XII.

LIGHT AND SHADOW.

FROM this day Alice grew better, and began to assume her family duties. It is a blessed thing that time heals all griefs, even the bitterest; for a long-indulged sorrow, for the dead or any other hopeless loss, would deaden our sympathies for those still left, and make a sinful apathy steal over the soul, absorbing the powers which ought to be devoted to the service of God, and robbing life of the enjoyment which is ever to be found in the discharge of the work to which we are called. Many refuse to be divorced from the sorrow brought by death, and cling to the oppressive, mournful recollection of past joys, not comprehending that He who knows the extent of the trial never sends it but in mercy, and that with God to comfort none can ever be really desolate. As the bosom of the earth blooms again and again, having buried out of sight "the dead leaves of autumn and loosed the frosty bands of winter, so may the heart

rejoice in many renewed springs and summers," for existence is itself a great blessing, particularly to those who endeavour to fill it up by working for God.

Yet there were times when despondence could not be altogether banished. They all did what they could in the way of industry, working until far in the night, at the same time living most frugally; trying to lay up something toward the paying of the debt. The mother spun and sewed; Mary still braided straw and made palm-leaf hats; Robert, in addition to his mat and basket-making, had learned to knit, and, never idle, added no little to the general stock. We have said little of the blind boy, but we must speak of him now. He was like a girl in gentleness and domestic skill; feeling the misfortune of his blindness deeply, but never making it an excuse for idleness, he did everything he could to lighten the labours of the rest. His mind was of a higher tone than ordinary, and he was naturally silent and thoughtful. He loved to carry his work out of doors, and in the warmth of the material sun worship that Sun whose light he saw in the hidden world of his heart, and who is the Sun of all the worlds; to breathe the air which, through the prison-bars of his blindness,

spoke of freedom, and look forward to the hour when the hand of a loving Father should, in removing him to a better world, withdraw the veil of darkness and bid him see. Margaret had made many efforts to gain employment, but in vain; she therefore did what she could by assisting all the rest at home and carrying marketing to town, but all the time she was forming plans which she told to no one, and endeavoured to learn lessons of trust from the remembrance of the mercy which had followed her all her life. Had there been no debt to pay, they could have managed by their summer labours to lay up something for the wants of winter; but the wish to pay their kind friend often made them very anxious. But, while they thus used all the means that frugality and economy could dictate, they did not despair, for they knew how such a feeling cramps the energies even of a strong mind, and induces the very evils which are dreaded. There were times when Alice, on seeing how slowly the little fund increased, would give way to fits of despondence, but they did not last long, for Margaret's hopeful spirit encouraged her, together with the rest, and they all worked on, patiently waiting until better days should come.

One bright day, when all was smiling in the

beauty of early autumn, Margaret set out on her usual errand of carrying marketing to N——. Nature is ever a minister of happiness, and on this morning her influence was most plainly felt by the schoolmaster's daughter. Her basket was heavy, and feeling tired she sat down on a fallen log to rest, and as she did so was conscious of happier feelings than she had experienced for some time—holy feelings which sprang up responsive to the teaching of Nature. Beautiful was the wide expanse of country that lay beneath the morning sunshine—a peaceful earth, which seemed "smiling back the smile of heaven." All spoke loudly of the goodness of God—all told of a loving, working obedience to an Almighty will; and, filled with a humble devotion, she felt herself willing at any sacrifice to answer to the call of Him who has made this beautiful world, and at its completion "saw that it was very good," and who will always afford his children strength equal to their day. Tears sprang to her eyes, but they were tears of soothing, not of sorrow—such as she had not for a long time, perhaps never, shed before—and as she gazed upward into the almost cloudless sky, she felt her spirit drawn nearer to heaven when she thought of her father—he whom she so dearly loved and who loved

her—keeping a guardian's watch over her from the glorious mansions there. She took up her basket and proceeded to the house of Mrs. Ainslie, a wealthy lady, who for some time had been the purchaser of all her marketing. Situated rather in the suburbs, the house, spacious and elegant, stood at a little distance from the road, half-hidden by magnificent trees. The grounds in front and at the sides, ornamented with rare shrubbery, were arranged with perfect taste and kept in the best order. A broad gravel-walk led up to the high marble steps of the portico that formed the front entrance, and was guarded by two grayhounds cast in bronze. Margaret had never been admitted by this way, but by a small gate at the side, which opened upon a path that led to the back of the house and kitchen premises. She now made her way to a small room that opened from the dining-room, where, as usual, she found the cook, who talked all the time whilst she was emptying the basket.

"We are in a great muss just now," said she; "the nursery-maid has gone off in a huff, and the coloured waiter is sick at home, and Norah, the chambermaid, is as cross as a bear, and says she has too much to do, and will go off too if Mrs. Ainslie does not soon get somebody."

"Can't you always get some one?" asked Margaret; "I should think you might without any difficulty."

"You may well say that," replied Dolly, "for money, and there's plenty of that here, will get anything; but Mrs. Ainslie won't have everybody. She gives the highest wages and wants to be well served. But I most forgot. She said if you came to-day to tell you she wanted to see you; so I'll just let her know."

Mrs. Ainslie came almost immediately. Her dress was simple and neat, and her personal appearance so extremely prepossessing that Margaret, who had scarcely seen her until now, at once yielded to the most favourable impressions. Alas! that they were destined to undergo so sad a change! Her business with the schoolmaster's daughter was soon made known. After the usual remarks on the ingratitude of servants, she proceeded to inquire if Margaret knew anything of a young girl named Lizzie Wells, who had been highly recommended by a person she had lived with as being both honest and capable.

"The lady could not tell me exactly where she lived, but said it was somewhere in the neighbourhood of E—— Church, and as I know that you

also live there, I preferred to ask you what was the character she bears about home."

"An excellent one," replied Margaret; "the family go to the same church that we do, and everybody speaks well of them."

"Do you know if she is at home?"

"I saw her at church last Sunday," said Margaret; "so it is likely that she is not at service just now."

"I am obliged to ask you to do me a favour," said Mrs. Ainslie; "my coloured servant is sick, and I have no one by whom I can send word, because I do not know how to direct them. Would it be out of your way or put you to much trouble to ask her to come and see me just as soon as possible, for I must have some one immediately? and you may tell her that I will give her seven dollars and a half a month, and, if she pleases me, more."

Margaret replied that although her way did not lay directly past Mrs. Wells' house, she could, by going a little round, see her within a few hours and without any trouble.

"Send her, then, at once; I must know by tomorrow, as I cannot wait."

Margaret, as she proceeded on her homeward way, pondered over the occurrences of the morning,

and her mind was filled with many thoughts. "Seven dollars and a half!" said she; "that is clear gain. If I could get that in addition to what the others make at home, we could soon clear the debt."

Having reached the spot where she had rested in the morning, she sat down and pursued the train of thought awakened by her visit to C——. When is the tempter not busy, and are there any to whom a conflict with his attack is spared? The temptations natural to us from the dispositions with which we are born follow us through our whole lives; and we have already spoken of Margaret Gordon as being ambitious and attaching an undue regard to the possession of money; and now, as she sat there, she felt as if she half envied Lizzie Wells the prospect of living in that beautiful house—such a contrast to her mother's cabin—and an amount of wages that to them would be positive wealth. "How silly I was not to propose myself for the place!" said she to herself. "I know I would suit quite as well, for I can do many things that Lizzie cannot. Suppose I don't tell her about it, and go right back and engage with Mrs. Ainslie myself? It would not be any harm to Lizzie. She can always get a place, for having always lived out, she is well

known. I have made up my mind to live out, for if I do not we will have to give up our home, and then I do not know anybody. It is true that I have not seen much of Mrs. Ainslie, but I have served her for a long time, and she pays so liberally and is so prepossessing that it will hardly seem like being a servant to live there."

"Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." Margaret Gordon was a good girl, but no one is perfect—no one able to resist the tempter's force unless strongly fortified by grace. How would she determine? Would she, who had gone on so many steps in the way of right, turn to deliberately take one in the way of wrong? An important one it might be, for, if successful, it would be the first step into a new life; and can a blessing rest upon any work commenced in an improper spirit? She was not one given to linger, for there was always so much to do at home; but now she remained buried in her own thoughts, not conscious of how quickly the minutes were passing —those short minutes that might afford space for a determination the after-thought of which might cause many a severe pang. No one is secure from the power of temptation, which is ever lying in wait for the unwary. Margaret's temptation to act,

as we have stated, might seem a trifling one to many, but "it is always the first step that costs or tells." Had she yielded, what trouble might it not have brought? But the Bible tells us that no one is tempted above that he can bear, and that with the temptation is always sent a way of escape. But, as we have shown, a struggle sincere and ardent had begun in Margaret's heart; not the inconstant effort of a heart clinging to this world whilst feebly desiring heaven, but the steady determination that, cost what it might, be the labour of conquering her natural propensities ever so arduous, she would devote herself to it in faith, and, with assisting grace, endeavour to prove herself worthy of the Christian's high calling. She was not left to fall. The day was bright and beautiful, the clouds sailed slowly amid the blue, and there was no sound, not even the singing of birds, to break the perfect quiet that brooded around. A scene of sweet, quiet loveliness lay spread out before her, and its sweetness passed into her soul and awakened all the better feelings of her nature. She forgot the subject of her present anxiety, and recognized the love of God, who has prepared this beautiful dwelling-place for his creatures, and tinged every object with a light more glorious than the

sunlight under which they lay. All spoke of his power and his wisdom. His goodness and his love, and the contemplation of the lovely landscape, led her thoughts to Him who, the Creator of the universe, is infinitely more glorious and greater than them all. The momentary mist passed away from her soul; conscience spoke, and her voice was not unheeded. Ashamed and self-condemned that she had even for a moment deliberately harboured a thought of wrong, she started up and hastened onward to do her errand at Mrs. Wells', and obtain another conquest over self. A lesson of simply doing right for the present and trusting to God for the future was put before her, and, difficult though she found it to be, she was resolved, with the help of assisting grace, to do it. Most faithfully did she detail all that Mrs. Ainslie had said, mentioned the high wages and her own impressions of the desirableness of the place. But was she sorry when Mrs. Wells shook her head and said—

"It is too late. Lizzie went to Farmer Dawson's some days ago. It's a good place, and although she don't get such big wages as you say, she would not leave it to live with the quality, for the farmer's folks just made her one of themselves, and the quality do not care about their helps, only

just to get as much work out of them as they possibly can."

When Margaret returned home she told her mother everything that had occurred, and how she had for some time been ruminating on various plans by which they might be able to meet the family expenses and pay the debt yet resting on the house.

"You know, mother," she said, "we can't do it on what we sell from our little garden or the sewing-work, which we don't get constantly; and I have been thinking, now, since you have got so much better, that since I cannot get a school, try as I may, like Martha Harding, I will look for a place and live out."

Mrs. Gordon did not at once reply, but Mary did.

"Live out as a hireling servant! our Margaret live out!" she cried. "Mother, don't let her do any such thing!"

"No, mother," said Robert, "we can't spare Maggie; what are we to do at home without her? Please, mother, do not let her go."

"Why, Maggie, what will Aunt Maxwell and everybody say when they hear that our Maggie, who is so well fitted for a school-teacher, is gone

out as a servant?" again urged Mary. "And the Greens and the Burtons, and all the rest—they will all say, Maggie, that you do not think much of yourself."

"I think too much of myself to remain at home in comparative idleness when we have a debt to pay," replied Margaret. "If we wish to keep our home, we must work to pay what is still owing on it; and I see no other way in which it can be so readily done as by my taking this place, for the wages, together with my board, are a great deal more than I could earn by my needle, and is, besides, sure and constant."

"But it's living out, Maggie," said Robert, "and you will be considered and called a servant, and have to be one of the kitchen-folks. If poor father had never got hurt, we might now be rich and living in N——, as we used to. Do not go—wait until next year, and I am sure you will get a school; but do not live out."

"Children," said their mother, at last, "do you consider that if we wish to pay this debt to Uncle John and keep our home, we must work in some way or other in order to do so."

"But living out!" cried Mary, scornfully.

"What is the harm of Margaret's or any one's

taking every honest means of doing a present duty?" asked the mother. "Have you thought how much we would lose by living week after week and month after month, waiting and wishing, and after all finding ourselves no nearer to the object of our wishes? Is it not better to go resolutely to some honest work in order to earn the means for the desired end? Many shrink from the performance of positive duty by thinking, 'I cannot do so and so,' or 'What will people say?' and thus allow themselves to rust away in uselessness, wasting the precious time given them for most important purposes, when a little independent exertion would place them in positions of trust and importance."

"But, mother," said Mary, not yet convinced, "everybody says our Maggie would make a first-rate teacher, and I have always thought that she would be somebody yet, father took so much pains to teach her everything. Don't you think there is something for her to do besides 'living out?'"

"We have all for many years been accustomed to labour at something in order to live," said Alice, gravely, "yourself and even Robert assisting, and you have never thought yourselves disgraced by it. 'Living out' is only a different branch of labour,

and I do not know of anything which degrades it but the character of the labourer; and Margaret can preserve her integrity and self-respect quite as well serving in Mrs. Ainslie's nursery as in presiding over a school. She will also have quite as good an opportunity of learning the 'great art of self-control and self-sacrifice, and patient effort,' so needful to help us on in the toilsome journey of life, as she would in admonishing, correcting or teaching dozens of untutored minds over which she might be called to rule."

"Let us ask Uncle John and Aunt Hannah what they think of it?" said Robert.

"No," was the reply; "it would be very improper to do so, because they would perhaps not like to answer as they would do if the debt was not owing to them."

"Then, mother, you wish her to go?" was Mary's inquiry, which, however, received no answer, for the conversation was at this point interrupted by the entrance of Mr. and Mrs. Upton, who came often to see the bereaved family, and their visit just at this time was particularly welcome. The subject in hand was freely discussed, but we will not weary our readers with a detail of the conversation. Mr. Upton's views of the mat-

ter were nearly the same as those expressed by James Gordon in relation to Martha Harding's undertaking—going to service implied no real degradation in the eyes of those whose good opinion is worth having. "You are all doing something to support yourselves. Margaret has for a long time been trying to qualify herself for a teacher, but it seems that, unless she should go far from home, she has no prospect of getting a school at present. But she is not willing to remain inactive until better times come, but is contented to make efforts for securing such advantages as are within her reach, or, in plain speech, to work at anything honest to aid in keeping a permanent home for her family. Now, I cannot see how any honest work, in the attainment of such an end, ought to lower her in her own estimation or in that of anybody's else. The well-judging would rather applaud than censure."

"My greatest trouble is, that in such a different life Margaret might be led away by bad example or evil advice," said her mother; "she is so young to go out into the world alone."

"If we are called upon to live with only those who are religious, there would be comparatively little to try the sincerity of our profession or genu-

ineness of our faith," rejoined Mr. Upton. "But it is very seldom that such a position is provided for any one: God makes us his children; he sets before us good and evil, life and death. He gives us good instructions, and promises to aid with his Holy Spirit when we pray to him; and then he places us, as it were, in a battle, with temptations before and behind and around us, and bids us to fight and conquer. Margaret now goes forth to this battle of life—a battle in which all must share—but armed and sustained by the principles inculcated in her whole previous life. She must be watchful and wary, that she strays not from the true path, and so bring dishonour on the cause she now professes to serve."

"Then you think it right that Margaret should take this service?" said Mary. "It's dreadful to be treated as an inferior, and have to associate with low people; we have had to work, and work hard, too, all our lives, but we have never associated with any but respectable people."

"Margaret, if she takes the place, need not sink herself to the level of those ordinary servants whom she may occasionally be obliged to meet with; but, by maintaining a proper Christian demeanour toward those who may not have had the same ad-

vantages as herself, she may do them a great deal of good. It is true that she may at times feel that her position is less pleasant than it was here, in this rustic community; but she must remember that distinctions exist in every rank of society, and that neither education nor Christian principles require us to overlook these distinctions; and I have no fear but that Margaret's good sense and good education will keep her from venturing outside of her own proper sphere. You say she is to have the charge of little children; I am truly sorry to lose her from my Sunday-school, but she can carry a missionary spirit into the nursery of the rich, and sow seeds of truth in those young minds which shall grow up into unfading wreaths of far more worth than the conqueror's crown. The natural distinction, too, between the employer and employed does not prevent the exercise of friendship between them; outward deference to those above us in society ought to be freely accorded, for, although belonging to the things of this world, it is an obligation rendered sacred by the ordering of God's providence, and forms no barrier against securing the affection and confidence of those above us. A good and faithful girl, who does her duty not as 'eye-service,' but rather to obtain the

'honour' which comes from God only, will be sure, sooner or later, to win confidence and regard. Read the epistle of Paul to Philemon, which bears much upon this subject. We are told that Onesimus was a runaway slave; Paul was a gentleman by birth and education; yet was Onesimus to be received 'not now as a servant, but as a brother beloved'—a brother because born to the same heavenly inheritance, and working, though still a servant in the eyes of men, for the same glorious end. Difference, therefore, in worldly rank need not, if both parties possessed proper principles, prevent an interchange of those Christian sympathies which grow out of the laws of Christian kindness, and are calculated to add to the happiness of every one, let their situation be ever so exalted or ever so lowly. 'Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of love,' was an admonition given in the early days of Christianity, and is as binding now as then; and if every one, no matter what his rank in life might be, would walk by that rule, humanity would be shorn of half its trials, and consequently relieved of much of its sorrow."

Margaret had said little, but she had listened attentively, and every word spoken by her good pas-

tor had sunk deeply into her heart. Her tears flowed silently, for her great natural pride revolted from the idea of servitude. Her lot, although a very humble one, had been one of independence, and in that rustic community the family was on equality with their neighbours; and she knew that going to service would lower her, as it had done Martha Harding, in the estimation of most. This thought, however, did not deter her from her purpose; and, as she listened to Mr. Upton's words, she determined to perform any duty which might be required of her, considering herself not as working for man, but for God—not as a member of human society, but as a fellow-citizen with the saints and of the household of God. "Make me to go ever in the path of thy commandments" was a text which she now recalled; and with this prayer upon her lips and this wish in her heart, she resolved to pursue her course of service if she should obtain the desired place.

CHAPTER XIII.

MARGARET LEAVES HOME—ALL IS NOT GOLD THAT GLITTERS.

MARGARET had not long to wait before her anxiety about the situation was relieved. Mr. Upton, who was acquainted with the Ainslies, gave her a letter, which was a strong recommendation and caused her immediate engagement. The last evening at home passed off better than might have been expected. No one could feel very cheerful, but all tried to look on the bright side of her departure—the prospect of her being such a help to her family; and none would allow their minds to dwell too much on the thought of the sad blank which the absence of her bright face and cheering voice would make in the family circle. Mr. Upton and the Browns came in to say "good-bye," and speak words of encouragement to the one who was going forth to tread in an unknown path of life, all the thorns of which were hidden from sight in the distance, and cheering to the lonely ones left behind. They remained until the time

for prayers came. The pastor read the third chapter of Colossians and afterward added a few words on the duty of those who became servants to an earthly master, showing how no service can be faithful unless it is performed from the heart, and how, while they fulfil their duty to an earthly master, it should ever be with the remembrance that they are serving a yet higher authority, and therefore it must be done in singleness of heart, fearing God. And when they kneeled in prayer, he commended her earnestly to the keeping of that God who has promised to care for the seed of those that have made him their trust. He prayed that she might be kept under his protecting care and never be suffered to fall into any kind of sin, but, ever mindful of her Christian calling, be enabled through grace to do always that which was lawful and right, letting her light so shine before men that others might see it, and so be led to glorify her Father in heaven. Next morning, John Brown came with his carryall for Margaret and her trunk, and she shortly afterward found herself in the little back room before mentioned. Few words had been spoken on the short journey, but those of his leave-taking were characteristic, and showed the native kindness of his heart.

"I will call and see you sometimes—that is, if I don't be in the way."

"You in the way? No, indeed, Uncle John! you can never be anything but welcome."

"You are a good girl, Maggie, and I am sure you will get along, although you will be sure to meet trouble sometimes. But just let me say one thing before we part: I often told your father that I would be a friend to you all after he was gone; and I can only say now, if ever you want anything come to me, and if I can help you, I will. So make yourself easy about your mother and the others; we shall all feel glad to help and cheer her."

A few minutes afterward, Margaret found herself in the parlour, whither she had been summoned to meet Mrs. Ainslie, and where she was wellnigh dazzled by the elegance of the surroundings. Tall mirrors reached from the ceiling to the floor, the carpet seemed like a bed of flowers too beautiful to be trodden upon, and the sunlight, softened by the rich, dark crimson curtains, fell upon the pictures that adorned the walls and tinged them with a rosy hue. Mrs. Ainslie, dressed in the most fashionable style, was seated in a deep-cushioned chair, covered with green velvet, reading a novel; and all was so

wonderfully bright that it seemed more like a dream than reality. She bowed slightly, without rising, suffering Margaret to remain standing whilst she made up the sum of her own requisitions. We will not weary the reader with the already well-known scene of hiring one either for servant or governess. Mrs. Ainslie was, although a very weak woman, a person of refined and polished manners, and now her tones were as soft and gentle as though she was entreating a favour rather than demanding a service; and Margaret's prepossessions were not diminished at present, whatever they might be in future. As she stood whilst Mrs. Ainslie was specifying the numerous duties expected from her, she saw a door in front of her unclosed and two little faces appear, one above the other, in the opening. The upper one belonged to a girl of perhaps seven years old, and, with a profusion of golden-hued curls and a pair of laughing blue eyes filled with an expression of fun and frolic, was perfectly lovely. The other, that of a boy much younger, was equally beautiful, with black eyes, full of mischief, and a rosy little face glowing and merry, brightened all day long by universal favour, both looking as happy as if there were no nursery rules to be observed or commands to be obeyed. Mrs.

Ainslie noticed the interruption, and, turning round, exclaimed, laughing:

"Oh, you naughty darlings! who gave you permission to leave the nursery at this time of day? But, since you are here, come and speak to your new nurse. Come, Gracie; come, Philip—my pretty pets—be good children now. Do come, and please mamma."

But Gracie and Philip had no notion of "being good children" or of "pleasing mamma" at that time, for the only answer to the request was by slamming the door and a boisterous laugh on the outside. Mrs. Ainslie arose, and opening the door continued her solicitations, but without effect. The merry shouts and laughter which accompanied the little pattering footsteps on the stairs were the only reply. At length both died away in the distance, and Mrs. Ainslie, looking a little ashamed as she returned from her bootless errand, once more addressed Margaret.

"Dear little things!" said she, "how I do love the sound of their merry voices! They seem rude, but are only bashful; and as I like children to be perfectly natural, I have not the heart to put any restraint upon them. But I must tell you what I expect of you. My children are all backward in

their studies—at least people tell me so—but I do not care for any one's opinion. Besides, I do not see the use of depriving the poor little things of air and play and free exercise for the sake of tasks and lessons, or sacrificing their ease and comfort to devote the time to books. Let them enjoy the sports of childhood as long and as fully as possible. It is but a short period, and then there will be time enough for tasks. I hope you will get along well, but you must attend to your duties without expecting me to be always reminding you of them. In the first place, the children are always to be kept neat and clean; you are to see that their wardrobe is in perfect order; if anything is wanting, let me know, for they must always be dressed well. I want you to help Louisa with her lessons; she has a governess, who ought to come every day, but she requires to be aided in preparing her lessons, and I cannot bear the trouble of going over school exercises with a child. As I understand you have had some education, I dare say you will be able to assist her; the governess is very unpunctual. The little ones are to be taught entirely by you. You will take your meals in the nursery with Grace and Philip, for I want you to be with them all the time. You will be somewhat confined—you know

I told you so—so you must be content to stay with them in the evening, as well as in the day-time, for you know the baby must never be left alone."

Margaret was still standing; she felt weary and miserable, and she shrank a little from the prospect before her. She had no reply to make, and Mrs. Ainslie continued:

"I like the children to go out whenever the weather is pleasant; but sometimes, if the baby cannot go or if you are too busy, the chambermaid will take them. I want you, however, to do as much sewing as you can, for in a family like mine there is always a great deal to be done. I suppose you, coming from the country, do not know anything about embroidery?"

Margaret was more startled than at first. She thought, with the entire charge of four children and their wardrobe, there was little more that she could do, but she answered quietly that she could embroider, although she had not done much of that kind of work lately, but that she would try to fulfil all her duties to the best of her ability. But even as she spoke she remembered to have once seen a mule who was employed, by some men who were repairing a causeway, in carrying sand; the animal had a wooden pannier fitted upon its back, and was sent

to and from the sand-bank to a cart, which waited to be loaded, at a distance of about eight hundred yards. She had often watched the poor creature as it trudged to and fro across this measured space doggedly and patiently, pausing at the one end of its journey to receive its burden, and at the other end to be relieved from it, and pausing for nothing else. Margaret thought of this mule whilst Mrs. Ainslie was speaking; yet she had not the least idea of shrinking from her undertaking, for she had an important end in view, and resolved to bear meekly whatever difficulties she might be called to encounter. She had known hard work all her life, and she was not to expect anything else now. Mrs. Ainslie was about to give further directions, but was interrupted by visitors. Bidding Margaret touch the spring of a bell to which she directed her, a neat Irish girl almost immediately appeared, whom she addressed as Norah, and bade her go with Margaret to the nursery. The way led up a handsome flight of stairs to a room in the third story, which, having reached, Norah opened the door and bade her enter. It was strikingly neat, as was, indeed, every part of the house; but its greatest attraction was the prospect from the windows which overlooked the garden—a spot which, under the care of

a skillful gardener, was kept in the finest order. The room was furnished with a maple bedstead with chintz curtains, a bureau, a crib and cradle—in which lay a fine baby of nine months old—and all other articles requisite for the comfort of its occupants, for Mrs. Ainslie prided herself on having everything comfortable for those around her. But it was more for the gratification of her own pride than a higher motive, for she could not realize that a servant might want anything more than pleasant rooms, good food and high wages, and considered a place in her house as the most desirable situation any domestic might wish. She was rather easy-tempered, hating trouble, but worldly and selfish, with a desire to shine conspicuously in the circles of fashionable life. A foolish love of display and ambition to outdo every one in the splendour of her entertainments and elegance of dress, had brought into subjection every other feeling and wish, and caused her to lose sight of those high moral principles which should be in every heart the rule of action. By no means unamiable, she yet did harm often by thoughtless remarks; and although she would never have troubled herself to seek out cases of distress, her purse was always open when any one called upon her for relief. She

was liberal by nature and from habit, and to give was far more easy than to refuse; besides, she had money at command, for her husband was a man of great wealth, and, wholly immersed in business, he left everything subject to her control. But with all this liberality, and never scolding at her servants for negligence, she yet did not hesitate to exact the utmost amount of labour from a yielding domestic, and, priding herself on her good management, boasted of and held up her exploits in that way as patterns for imitation.

"This is your room and the baby's," said Norah; "those other doors open to the children's bed-room and the play-room. Mrs. Ainslie's is the front one on the floor below, for she likes to be out of the way of the children herself, though she don't care how much bother they are to others. Do you like children, Margaret?—for I believe that's your name."

"Yes, very much," was the reply.

"All the better for you, for it's more than I do," said Norah. "You have not come any too soon for me, for I have had more of the nursery than I like. The baby is a good little thing, but the others are the very sorrow—first one thing is wanted and then another, as you will find out."

"How very pretty they are!" said Margaret, who did not know what else to say, her instincts of propriety leading her to check a conversation the tone of which she thought was improper. But Norah went on:

"'Pretty is as pretty does,' and when they are dressed up I like well enough to take them out to the square, for the folks notice them ever so much. I do it often when the nurse is busy sewing. But I heard the cook say you were a good seamstress."

"I have always been accustomed to sew a great deal," said Margaret, modestly.

"So much the worse for you, for the more you do the more you will have to do, that I can tell you; the mistress is good pay, but she understands getting the worth of her money out of any one. But it's nothing to me, you know," she added, checking herself as she noticed Margaret's grave demeanour, which did not invite such free remarks, and made her feel that she was doing wrong; "you'll find it out soon enough for yourself;" and then opening one of two doors, she continued:

"This is the play-room or nursery, and is a nice enough place if the children knew how to behave. That biggest one, sitting by the window, is Miss Louisy; she's to be humoured in everything, right

First View of the Nursery.

Page 249.

or wrong, because she's not in good health. Master Philip, there, likes to have his own way, and he gets it too, for he's never to be crossed, for fear—his mother says—it will make him moping, and boys ought to have spirit; and that other one, Miss Grace, will keep you busy in watching her: she's got a will of her own, and is humoured in everything because she's pretty, and crying would spoil her face. She's never out of mischief, and worse to manage than all the rest put together. There is the bell; I must go now, but I will come back as soon as Mrs. Ainslie is ready for her ride, and help you to get acquainted with the children. Here, Miss Louisy, and you, Miss Gracie—here's your new nurse. Come, Gracie, do be good for once, and come and speak to Margaret."

"I won't," said Grace; "just go away; we are done with you."

"Goodness knows I am glad of it," said Norah, as she left the room hastily, as if rejoiced to get out of it.

The appearance of the apartment was in nowise calculated to throw discredit on the statements made by Norah, for it was a picture of disorder. Picture-books and toys were scattered on the table and the floor in wild confusion; the inkstand had

been upset on the carpet; a stool, overturned, was lying with its face to the floor—all presenting a sight by no means calculated to lessen the feeling of home-sickness which was spreading itself over poor Margaret's heart. Grace, with a shower of golden-hued curls round her lovely face, was sitting on the floor in the middle of the room, busily employed in destroying her last new toy—a barking dog, or, rather, a dog that would never bark again, as its pedestal had been broken open "to see where the bark came from." Mrs. Ainslie never punished her for doing such mischief as this, because she thought it was the result of an inquiring mind, which is never content without finding out the cause of everything. Master Philip was in a corner behind his eldest sister, playing with a favourite kitten, round whose velvet paws he was winding some bright-coloured worsted which he had, unseen, abstracted from a basket standing on the window-seat. Pussie did not seem to like this raveling play very much, and would have scratched if the operator were any one but Philip; but she was used to him, and perhaps had learned, like Norah, "that the Ainslie children are not to be crossed." Louisa, a delicate-looking girl of eight or nine years of age, sat in a low rocking-chair near the window,

embroidering a pincushion in worsted. Less beautiful than Grace, she at once attracted Margaret's interest, for it was a sweet, pale face, with an expression of premature intelligence and feeling in her large dark eyes, making her look older than she really was, and seemed to show that her stay on earth was most likely to be a painful if not a short one. There were a few minutes of silence after Norah left, which was first broken by Louisa, who, rising from her chair, approached Margaret, and in a voice of singular sweetness and, with winning gentleness of manner, said :

"Are you Margaret, who is to be our new nurse ?"

"I am Margaret, Miss Louisa, and I hope you will like me, for I will do my best to please you," was the reply.

"I am sure I shall like you," said Louisa ; "but do you love to read, and can you tell stories—I mean stories out of books ?"

"I love to read, perhaps only too well for a nursery servant," said Margaret, half smiling ; "and at home we often told stories that we found in books to each other, in the evenings, after our work was done."

"And will you read to me and tell me stories when I ain't well ?"

"Yes, Miss Louisa, as often as I can find time to spare from your mamma's work."

The child's intelligent face, which had brightened under Margaret's ready assent, was somewhat clouded as she heard the last words added; perhaps she knew how far, on this condition, her wishes were likely to be gratified, and anticipated disappointment, for she returned to her seat and remained silent. Margaret went into the other room to take off her bonnet and shawl, where, to her great surprise, she met Norah just entering, her "curiosity to know how Margaret was getting along with the young plagues" overcoming her dislike to children and the nursery.

"Did iver!" she exclaimed, as she saw what the children were doing—"did iver anybody see such a mess as is here? Gracie, ain't you ashamed to spoil that pretty dog that your Aunt Fanny gave you two days ago? Why did you not give it to Master Philip, who would not ruin it as you have done?"

"I won't give him my dog, at all," cried Grace; "I'll put him in the closet with my broken wax doll. Oh, Norah, he won't bark any more! Please tell me what made it go away."

"What went away?" inquired Norah, as she ad-

vanced to the corner where Philip was maintaining a conversation with the kitten, while he continued to ravel the Berlin wools.

"The bark, Norah; the bark," replied Grace. "I only made a hole here and there, and my pretty dog won't bark, let me do as I will. I only wanted to see where the bark came from, and I can't find out."

"I guess not," said Norah, "for he's kilt, an' no two ways about it; you've sp'ilt the poor thing intirely. How would you like it if somebody would make holes in your neck, just to see how your voice came? But, Miss Louisy, just look what a mess Master Philip has made of your mamma's worsteds, winding them round the kitten's feet. A pretty job you'll have, Margaret, to get them unwound."

"You sha'n't—you sha'n't!" cried Philip, as Norah rather rudely took hold of them. "I'll tell mamma."

The chambermaid, however, conquered; but the noise awoke the baby, who began to cry loudly.

"I'll feed her for you this time," said Norah, as she lifted the infant from the cradle, "for she'll be strange with you at first, I suppose, but 'll soon get used to you;" and, taking a covered pitcher

and silver cup from the mantel-piece, she showed Margaret how the nursery lamp was to be used and the baby's food prepared.

Philip had by this time forgotten his defeat, and was riding round the room on a cane. Grace had thrown the dog aside and was tossing a ball, to the manifest danger of the looking-glass and windows, and Louisa sat poring over her book and examining the pictures. Margaret scarcely knew how to begin to conciliate these undisciplined children, but an effort must be made.

"Come here, Master Philip, won't you, and show me your pretty cane?" said she.

"I won't—I don't like you—you are ugly," was the reply.

Grace laughed loudly, but Louisa reproved:

"Ain't you ashamed, Philip, to be so naughty? I'll tell mamma."

"Do, tell-tale," said Grace; "who cares? Mamma will only laugh, for she always says she likes us to have fun. I am sure she laughed enough the day I put the cold pennies down Norah's back and made her jump ever so."

"Yes," said Norah, "but she'd better have punished you, for you are getting so bad that after a while nobody will have anything to do with you."

Margaret, while Norah attended to the baby, had picked up the things from the floor and was arranging the room, even while trying to conciliate Philip and Grace. Louisa noticed it and seemed pleased.

"Mamma won't say you are stupid; she can't bear stupid folks," said she, half smiling; "and I am sure she will make Gracie behave herself."

"If she does, it will be something she never did yet," said Norah; "but I must go now in earnest;" and as she spoke she gave the baby to Margaret; but the little one shrank from a stranger.

"Miss Louisa, will you not come and play with your little sister?—she is afraid of me," said Margaret.

"I don't feel like playing just now; let Gracie amuse her," answered Louisa, in a peevish tone.

"I won't," said Grace; "she's cross, and scratches. I'd rather run and play in the garden."

Philip had by this time regained the kitten, and when Margaret asked him, with a smile, "Will you not come, Master Philip, and let baby see pussy?" he complied at once.

Margaret, glad to have advanced one step, entered into conversation with him, and, not thinking it too much trouble to amuse him, readily adapted

herself to his taste and understanding, told him a kitten story, which interested them all, and shed sunshine where lately all had been discord and confusion. The baby got over her shyness, and played "bo-peep" with Philip. Louisa forgot her languor and Grace her mischief, and much of Margaret's home-sickness abated and was lost sight of in the effort she was making to rise above annoyance, and in accordance with the precepts taught in God's holy Word, diligently to perform her duty in the station to which he had appointed her. They were all clustered around her when Mrs. Ainslie entered.

"Why, you have become quite sociable already," said she; "I am very glad of it. Children, you must be very good and do as Margaret bids you. Louisa, as your governess is sick, you must say your lessons to your nurse now; and you, too, my pretty Gracie. You do not know what a sweet child she is, Margaret—a little mischievous sometimes. You must try to make them love their lessons, or you will never be able to manage them. Poor Miss Train did not get along well; she was too impatient. My children always seem unable to do anything they do not love. I suppose it is because their feelings are so ardent that their minds

cannot act except in concert with their tastes and affections. I therefore wish them to be ruled by love, and not have them made rude by stern discipline, for rudeness is perfectly intolerable to me. Louisa, you can come down stairs with me for an hour, or until after tea;" and then kissing the others for "good-night," she left the room.

Margaret found it a most difficult task to amuse these untrained children, and was completely tired out when bed-time came. She looked around the beautifully furnished rooms, and thought how preferable was her mother's humble cottage, where were love and peace. Her estimate of the value of wealth, and the amount of happiness conferred by it, had much diminished in the course of the day, and she would gladly have exchanged the luxurious food now provided for her and her gay surroundings for the homely toil and simple fare at which she had been so often tempted to repine. When the hour for bed-time came, she undressed Philip and Grace, but before putting them in their cribs, she asked them if they would not say their prayers. The poor little things had never been taught to pray, and did not seem to understand what she meant; but when she told them of One who was once a little child and loved little children, and

who would always take care of them, they were willing to be taught. She hesitated as to what might be her duty, but Mrs. Ainslie had said she "would leave the children altogether in her charge;" and remembering that the duty she owed to God, who placed her in her present position, was paramount, she resolved to pursue the missionary course spoken of by Mr. Upton, and, although "only a servant," try to make such an impression upon their immortal minds as might fit them to act their parts in life with nobler motives and higher purposes than those which governed their world-loving mother. How her heart warmed to the little creatures as, in their white dresses, they knelt beside her, and, folding their little hands, repeated from her teaching those simple words of prayer which constitute the first petition of every child who is taught to pray! Won by her gentleness and awed by her reverence, even the volatile Grace offered no opposition, but yielded gently to its influence and got quietly into her bed without her usual romping.

Philip, as she laid him in his crib, put his little arms round her neck, and, kissing her for good-night, said, "He won't let Indian Peter come now, will he?"

Margaret did not exactly understand, but as every one in that neighbourhood knew that "Indian Peter" was a bugbear used to frighten children into good behaviour, as was the name of the lion-hearted Richard by the Saracen mothers, she guessed the little boy's meaning. Not deeming this a proper time for explanation, she quieted him by saying "that nothing would hurt him, for God would take care of him;" and, satisfied with this assurance, he soon fell asleep. All were soon slumbering around her, and she was alone. Weary and homesick, she sat down to rest; and, discouraged by the day's experience, she shrank from the future. "Oh, home—home and my mother and all of them—why can I not live at home? or how can I stay here?" and the tears which she had restrained throughout the day now flowed freely. This mood, however, did not last long. "No, I will try to do my best and grapple with my hard duties. I will not go back to my mother, showing that I am weak and infirm of purpose, but rather return conscious of a well-fought battle, although I may not be able to conquer the difficulties I have to contend with." She took her well-worn Bible from her trunk, and, as it told her of a Friend who would teach her all she wished to know, who would

make every difficult thing easy, rendering the crooked paths straight and the rough places smooth, a sense of protecting love, unerring guidance and unfailing guardianship came over her, and she experienced that sweet sense of happiness that comes upon the soul that bows itself submissively to the divine word and strives in all earnestness and humility to do all God's pleasure. She continued to read until Louisa came up from the parlour, which was not until late—"there was so much company and they were playing cards; so mamma had let her stay." Margaret helped her to undress, and, as she was about to get into bed, asked her if she had not forgotten to say her prayers. Louisa looked surprised:

"I have not said any prayers since I stayed with Aunt Fanny, ever so long ago. She taught me to say, 'Our Father,' but I have forgotten it now. Do you know it? I always said it on my knees to Aunt Fanny. Do you go on your knees when you say your prayers?"

"Yes, I do; and will teach you the Lord's Prayer, if you will let me."

Louisa knelt down beside the humble nurse, who repeated the words of that beautiful prayer which, taught by the blessed Saviour himself,

has been loved and uttered by Christians for ages.

Margaret remained a little while after Louisa left, still pursuing her earlier train of thought, and then laid down to rest, after a fervent prayer that she might be enabled to glorify God in the right performance of all her duties in her new home, and especially that by his grace he would teach and help her to do all in her power for the best welfare and happiness of her youthful charges. Her talent might be small, but the Master of the labourer expected a return from him to whom he had given but one talent, as well as from him to whom he had entrusted ten; and with a heart filled with loving trust and humble devotion, she felt willing, at any sacrifice, to answer to the call of him whom she served; labouring with the one talent bestowed upon her with untiring zeal, until, through assisting grace, it should become five.

CHAPTER XIV.

LESSONS OF PATIENCE—PEACE AND POWER OBTAINED THROUGH PRAYER.

"I'VE just come for a moment to see how you got along last night," said Norah, as, with a duster in her hand, she came the next morning into the nursery, where she found Gracie tying the kitten to the back of Louisa's chair, who, with a box of water-colours before her, was too deeply engaged in colouring the pictures of her spelling-book to notice anything else; Philip was riding round the room on a cane, while Margaret was busily drying his shoes, which he and Grace had put into the wash-basin, "making them sail like boats." "You'll have to scare them into good behaviour, as Bridget did," said she, laughing. "Grace, do you want that kitten to scratch your sister's neck? You're the very sorrow for mischief. We'll have to send for Indian Peter again."

Grace untied the kitten and Philip quitted romping, and with a frightened look crept close to Margaret.

"It is wrong to frighten children," said Margaret, "and I will never try to manage them in that way."

"Pray, why? Where's the harm, I'd like to know?"

"In the first place, you tell the child," said Margaret, "what he will afterward find out is not true, and then he will not only not believe you when you speak the truth, but think he may tell falsehoods, too. And then I should be deceiving their mother, to whom I have promised to take good care of her children; and I am sure I would not be doing that if I forced them to good behaviour by working on their fears, instead of teaching them to do right from love to God and to their parents."

"Why, Margaret, your father must have been a preacher; you take things as seriously as if you were a graveyard," said Norah, flippantly. "What does it matter to Mrs. Ainslie how you manage to keep the children quiet? And telling them that Indian Peter's coming to carry them away in his bag, does no harm."

"But it does do harm, Norah—makes a child afraid to go out in the dark, and even dread being left alone. My father was no preacher, but only a country schoolmaster; but he taught us always to

practice truth in everything; and besides, on this very subject, he said one never could imagine how much a child suffers from fear, and told us many stories of persons who had been frightened in their childhood who had never been able to get over their foolish fears, and that many children had been made idiots by being so alarmed."

"That would be dreadful," said the good-hearted Norah, "and I'm glad I never did much of it. But it don't happen often, and that is one good thing."

"No," was the reply, "but think, if it should happen but once, how dreadful it would make one feel! and then, if we do the same thing—even if it should not turn out so badly—we, knowing it to be wrong, are just as guilty in the sight of God as if it produced the same evil."

Norah did not answer, for Philip by this time had climbed up into Margaret's lap, and Grace, tired of the kitten, was tearing a doll to pieces and strewing the bran with which it was filled on the floor.

"Tell me a story, Maggie," said Philip; "I will have a story."

"So will I," chimed Gracie; "you must tell us a story. Bridget always did—about 'Jack the Giant-

killer,' or 'Puss in Boots.' Come, you must begin. I'll tell mamma if you don't do what we wish."

"I will not tell you a story now," said Margaret, "for this is the time your mamma allotted for the hearing of your lessons; so get your book, Miss Gracie."

"And won't you tell us a story at all?"

"When you are good and have said your lessons well, I will always tell you a story. Master Philip, you were very naughty this morning when you put your shoes in the wash-basin; and you, too, Miss Gracie, when you threw the comb out of the window."

"Gracie told me to put my shoes in the water," cried Philip; "but you shall tell a story. If you don't, I'll holler just as loud as ever I can."

"So will I," said Grace, "and then mamma will think you have been whipping us."

"But Miss Louisa will tell the truth, I am sure," said Margaret; "but you do not conquer me by being naughty. I will always tell you a story when you are good, but never when you are not; and you are naughty now."

"You are ugly," said Philip, getting down from her lap, "and I don't like you; and I'll holler, see

if I don't;" and he and Grace both began to "holler" in a manner calculated to alarm any one.

Norah laughed. "Ah, Maggie," said she, as she prepared to leave the room, "you'll have to call on Indian Peter yet."

The "hollerin" ceased at the mention of this dreaded name, and a victory for the time was gained.

"See that, now!" said Norah; "you can never manage those two without a scare."

"Then I will never manage them at all," was the reply; "for if I cannot be faithful in what I consider my duty, I will give up my place, which, in most respects, is a very desirable one."

"The more fool you are; what need you care so they be quiet?" said Norah, as she left the room. "Little thanks ye'll get, do what you will, as you'll find out afore long!"

Margaret had for a second time that morning finished arranging the nursery, which was a perfect arsenal of toys, when Mrs. Ainslie entered, accompanied by a gentle-looking, middle-aged lady, whom the children, with a shout of joy, greeted as Aunt Fanny.

"I have brought you some work," Mrs. Ainslie said, as she unrolled a small bundle; "a white flan-

nel sacque, to be embroidered with floss silk, for the baby, and I expect it to be done well. Make the room comfortable and pleasant as possible, and do not neglect the lessons. You'll have plenty of time—the baby is so good, and the others amuse themselves; you won't have any trouble."

Mrs. Ainslie knew little of the care and time required by children, for she seldom visited the nursery, considering that, as she gave high wages, the one who received them was bound to act with strict fidelity in giving a full equivalent in labour. Weak and vain, knowing nothing of religion, she cared only for the world—what would be said and thought of her—what was considered etiquette—what was the highest fashion. The vain dreams of this mortal life were to her a vivid reality; and the one great object of her existence, to which every other consideration was to be sacrificed, was the external cultivation of her children, so as to appear to the best advantage in the circle to which their father's wealth entitled them. But as to the duty of endeavouring to fortify their young hearts against the ruinous influences to which that wealth and the unlimited indulgence allowed exposed them, but of leading them to feel that infinitely higher in importance than mere externals is that inward adorn-

ment of the hidden man of the heart that in the sight of God is of such great price, and of which the surest foundation is laid in childhood, Mrs. Ainslie never once thought.

The children, clustering noisily around "Aunt Fanny," inquired what she had brought them. For Louisa there was a book full of pictures; for Grace, a doll; and for Philip, a whip, which he made use of when Grace encroached too far on his privileges. The visit was a very short one. Mrs. Ainslie went out to ride, and the schoolmaster's daughter was once more left to consider how she could reduce into proper subordination these contumacious little subjects of her noisy realm. "There is but one way," she said to herself, "and this is by patience with their waywardness; and, as they are left so entirely to my care, I will try to make such an impression upon them as may fit them to act their part with better aims and higher motives than the service of the world." And so, with a consciousness of her own freedom of action, and, above all, of those duties she owed to God—so infinitely higher than those she owed to Mrs. Ainslie—she sought to discharge her duty with unwearied fidelity. The task was indeed a hard one, requiring the greatest effort of self-control and patience. She

had, as we have shown, been carefully trained in habits of forbearance and self-sacrifice; but, uncheered by the praise or unsustained by the counsel of the loved ones at home, she could not have continued so patiently to fulfil all her duties if she had not been governed by a wish to please God, and an endeavour to obtain the reward and blessing promised by the Saviour to all who try to serve him—the small as well as the great, the ignorant and the learned, the servant as well as the master. With thoughts like these deeply impressed upon her mind, the schoolmaster's daughter knelt morning and evening in earnest prayer that she might be enabled to walk firmly and unwaveringly in the way of God's commandments, and, in the faithful performance of her duties, act so as to be approved by him. Duty urged and enforced by love is the noblest principle God has given for the guiding of life; and seeking to please him whom she professed to serve by doing all her duties "heartily as unto the Lord and not to man"—not with eye-service as men-pleasers, but with singleness of heart, fearing God—she found her reward in peace of conscience, and the heavenly aid which was given day by day lightened her heavy burden—an aid always granted to those who make the service of God their highest joy.

Her time was fully occupied. One task was scarcely over before another was called for. This would not have been of so much importance had there been any order in their arrangement; but Mrs. Ainslie had no system, and never thought or cared for any one's convenience but her own, and therefore required Margaret to be ready at her every beck and call. Wishing to give satisfaction, and self-denying, she rose very early, even when disturbed by the baby at night, and often sat up until a later hour than was good for her health in order to do some mending for herself, but more frequently to finish some piece of work which was wanted "as soon as possible." Accustomed to steady industry, as she had always been, there were times when she could not help feeling that Mrs. Ainslie required, or at least expected, too much. The care of the children would have been quite enough to fill up her time; the baby was often fretful; Philip had a strong will of his own, and made many claims on her patience by interrupting her work, so that amusing him was not the least troublesome part of the day's routine. Grace was very forward and pettish, and, with an unconquerable propensity for perpetrating mischief, required constant watching. Louisa was gentle and quiet, but, indolent and hating trouble, chose rather

to learn her lessons by having them repeated to her than by taking pains to study them by herself. With proper management they would not have been bad children; as it was, they were so spoiled by a system of ruinous indulgence that the two, Grace and Philip, were perfect little outlaws. "Make everything as pleasant and comfortable for them as you can," was Mrs. Ainslie's desire, but she could not see the difficulty of the task imposed on Margaret by her own want of co-operation in the work of proper discipline. Sometimes, when they were particularly trying, Margaret would say:

"If you are so naughty, I shall have to tell your mamma, and what do you think she will say?"

Philip would at times be awed into something like order, but Grace was never overcome by this threat. She was her mother's favourite, and she knew that she could always make her story good against anything that Louisa or Margaret might tell. She had not been taught to love and speak the truth, and, having no fear of punishment, would say, archly and in a tone of defiance:

"Tell now: do not you hear mamma is coming?"

Sometimes, when mamma did really come and Louisa was greatly offended, she would greet her

with a series of complaints relative to Grace's trying ways. But the answer usually was,

"Hush, hush, my dear—command yourself; you are too excitable. What have you been doing, Gracie?"

"Nothing, mamma. Louisa is always cross."

"Well, don't be teasing, there's a good child. Louisa, my love, you have so little patience with any one; you can't expect such little things to be perfect. Margaret, I expected you to keep better order. When Bridget was here there was much less noise in the nursery. You must learn to manage better."

Then she would talk of the duty and importance of setting a good example, and look at the baby, and kiss Grace and Philip and call them her pretty pets; and that would be all. The consequence of the slight notice she took of the misdemeanours was that they every day grew more unruly and tried poor Margaret's patience to the utmost. She was anxious to do her duty, but how was she to do it when she was not upheld in the endeavour by their mother, who by her weak indulgence counteracted her best efforts to train them into proper behaviour, and often reproved her for neglect before the children, whilst she excused their shortcomings

or laughed at their mischievous pranks? It was an unfortunate forgetfulness or ignorance on Mrs. Ainslie's part, which caused her to overlook the fact that the best mode of ensuring respect for another is by exhibiting it in our own conduct toward them. Thus, whilst she told her children "to be good and do what their nurse bade them," she took the most effectual steps to render Margaret's authority utterly nugatory. There were often times when the trials of her present servitude seemed altogether unendurable, and, completely discouraged, she would feel ready to give up her place and seek another where, with less wages, there would be less fault-finding and fewer exactions. But there was a principle within that soon brought her to a more patient spirit. Was it not God who had allotted her present sphere of labour? She had also a high duty to perform for her family, and she knew it would cause them much anxiety if she should leave it; and the practice of that "charity which hopeth and beareth all things" enabled her to submit to the trial without a murmur. If she had no authority, she might have influence, and that would give her power to impress those young and plastic minds with such truths as children can never learn too early, and thus counteract the per-

nicious effects of an indulgence that if continued would prove their ruin. What made her task harder was that one day she overheard Mrs. Ainslie complaining "that the new nurse did not manage the children properly—that Philip and Grace frightened her with their noisy shoutings;" and her natural quick temper urged her to resent the wrong. She was, however, enabled to resist the weakness, and, animated by the thought, "Thou, God, seest me," she renewed her diligence to labour in her allotted sphere. Every one who performs the stern rules of duty with a high and holy purpose meets with his reward. She learned to listen without reply to undeserved reproofs and to submit to unmerited reprimands, wondering if she did not sometimes give cause for blame; and never murmured at the heavy exactions she was continually obliged to meet, until the calmness of her own mind became a sufficient recompense for all her difficulties; and the person most to be envied in the family of a man whose wealth seemed boundless was the poor girl who filled the humble place of nursery-maid to his children.

"Margaret," said Norah, one afternoon as she entered the nursery, "you are to dress the children, for Mrs. Preston is come, and they are

to take tea down stairs; so you will have a holiday."

"Not much of a one," said Margaret, "for I must have this dress for Gracie finished by to-morrow evening; I am glad, however, for I shall have time, and all will be so quiet."

The evening came, and Margaret found herself for the first time since leaving home alone, and as it gave her space to think—for, living where she did, where the things belonging to eternity were never thought of, and the pleasures of the world and how to fill up time in the enjoyment of everything that wealth could procure were made the chief objects, and her own crowded, busy, never-resting life gave her no leisure for self-examination—her thoughts reverted to her humble home, her labours there, and how often she had repined at their lowly lot and want of wealth; and now, as she looked around the room so luxuriously furnished, even as a nursery for the children of the rich, it brought back in strong contrast the absence of wealth and luxury in her own home, wondered, as she had often done before, at the inequalities of life. But no murmuring spirit awoke, as formerly; she had begun to see that high positions are places of danger, and how hard it is for those that have

riches to enter into the kingdom of God. And, for herself, was there not danger—after living as she now did, that when her term of service was ended she would go back discontentedly to the simplicity of her former country life? And was there also no danger that she, living where fashion, vanity, worldly ambition and love of display were all important, as if they involved lasting interests —that she, too, might become blinded, and, turning back to the beggarly elements of the world, be again in bondage?

Her meditations were interrupted by Norah: "I thought you would be lonesome, and so I've come to stay with you for a bit. But why do you not come down to the kitchen, where we are all so merry? The baby is asleep, so there is no need for you to mope here alone. And there! you are at some new embroidery, working on that dark red dress, just putting your eyes out. We are all talking, down stairs there, how Mrs. Ainslie is overloading you with work, and how pale you are getting to look."

"I believe I am not quite well," replied Margaret, "but I hope I will soon be better. Mrs. Ainslie wants this dress finished as soon as possible, and I am anxious to please her; besides, she gives

me very good wages, and has a right to expect I should earn them."

"You are mighty silly," returned Norah, "for she won't thank you, and you will keep your place and get your wages—for she don't care for money—all the same if you did not do half."

"The Bible, Norah, tells us, 'Servants, obey your masters, serving them not with eye-service, as men-pleasers, but in singleness of heart, as fearing God; and whatsoever ye do, do it heartily as unto the Lord and not unto men, knowing that your reward shall come from him;' and so I consider that that is the duty of servants—not only to do enough to keep their place, but to try to please their employer in all things."

"And so," retorted Norah, "you think it right, because Mrs. Ainslie is unreasonable and takes a double amount of work out of you through the day, to get up at daylight and sit late at night, to kill yourself just to please her. You are a silly girl to think of pleasing Mrs. Ainslie at the risk of injuring your health; you'll never get praised for your pains—that is, to your face, whatever may be said behind your back. However, she is satisfied with you, for I heard her, when I went to the parlour to attend to something, tell some ladies that

she had a nursery-girl who could do the work of three people, and saved her the price of a regular seamstress, which we have not had since you came; no, not even Miss Train comes now, since Miss Louisy says her lessons to you."

"All I have to do," said Margaret, gravely, "is to try a little longer, and then, if I find that what I am required to do is beyond my strength, I will give up my place. I shall not be able to work exactly as I have been doing, for I feel the need of more exercise."

"The truth is, Margaret, it is your place to go out with the children; and if Mrs. Ainslie cared as much about you as you do about her interests, she would not shut you up here in the nursery and overload you with work; and if you were not a fool you would not put up with it."

The autumn months passed quietly away, and brought no change to the routine of Margaret's life, save that the nursery was occasionally cheered by a visit from Mrs. Preston—"Aunt Fanny," as the children called her—who was a great favourite with them. She was Mrs. Ainslie's aunt, and, intelligent and pious, was the only person who ever spoke plainly to her niece on serious subjects. She was rich, a widow, and, living only a few miles distant,

came often to C——. She loved the children, but deplored the great mismanagement of them; but it was now with great pleasure she noticed the interest and affection of the new nurse, and often told Mrs. Ainslie that she was claiming more service than was just. She possessed the true missionary spirit, which seeks to do good at home, and so strove habitually to consider her servants as being brought to her by the providence of God that she might do them good; and was often pained to see her niece and others treat them as though they were of a different race from themselves, not considering who it was that had made them to differ. She had, however, never before met with one who discharged her duties in the manner and spirit which Margaret did; and often said to herself that one who governed herself by Christian principle, and sought to regulate her whole conduct by the will of God, could not fail to exert a salutary influence on her niece's children, and grieved because there was no co-operation.

The approach of Christmas was hailed with delight by the children, for there was to be a Christmas-tree and presents—and Aunt Fanny always gave them so many—and children's parties, where they always danced and had everything so nice;

and George and Frank were coming home, and they always were so merry. There was nothing like Christmas. Margaret, too, had looked forward to Christmas. Perhaps she would be permitted to spend it at home! She made the request; it was refused; and with the meek and quiet spirit which she had acquired she submitted to what she considered her duty, and prepared to continue her dull round of tasks while all the others were gay.

A week or two before the expected arrival of the boys, Mrs. Ainslie, accompanied by her aunt, entered the nursery:

"Here, Margaret, is some work I wish you to get at as soon as possible; it is shirts for the boys, and must be finished by the time vacation is ended. But you are not done, I see, with Gracie's dress; I think you have been very long about it; I cannot think why you have been so slow."

An answer rose to Margaret's lips, but she checked her rising anger, and replied "that a few hours' work would complete it," and then continued to search around for the embroidery silk, which could not be found.

"What are you looking for?" asked Mrs. Ainslie, "and where is the pincushion? I will pin this work in some places for you, as it is a new pattern."

But the pincushion could not be found.

"You are terribly careless, Margaret," said Mrs. Ainslie, impatiently; "it is one of my rules to have a place for everything and have everything in its place. How did you dress the children without pins?"

"I cannot find my scissors, Margaret," said Louisa, "and I want them; please find them. Oh, here they are: Philip had them, cutting out pictures, I remember. But mamma, only look here! Gracie has got my scissors and cut up the embroidery silk to make fringe for her doll's dress, and Philip has taken all the pins out of the cushion and stuck them in the carpet for soldiers!"

And so it was; then the pins, stuck upright, represented rank and file, making a game for his own amusement, and the beautiful red floss silk was all cut up into lengths an inch long, which Grace was busily sewing on her doll's dress.

"Oh, Gracie, how could you be so naughty, and spoil the silk? There would have been nearly enough for Louisa's dress. Margaret, send Norah up town for some more, for the dress must be finished to-day; and next time don't be so careless, but put the things out of the children's way."

A visitor was announced, and Mrs. Ainslie

obeyed the summons, leaving Mrs. Preston with the children until her return.

"What are you going to give us at Christmas, Aunt Fanny?" inquired Grace; "I want ever so many pretty things."

"I do not think I shall give you anything, if you are so naughty," said Mrs. Preston; "and you have been very naughty to-day, cutting up that beautiful silk and vexing your mother."

"Mamma don't care," replied Grace; "but Louisa is always so cross, and I don't like her."

"Not like your sister?" said her aunt, "how naughty! Are you not afraid to say so, and that God will punish you?"

"I am not afraid now," replied Grace, "for Maggie says there is no Indian Peter; and she says, too, that God will love me if I am good and say my prayers; and, Aunt Fanny, I do say my prayers now, every night and morning, and I ask God to bless me and make me good."

"But if you do not try to be good at the same time that you ask God to make you so, he will not love you; for, wherever you go or whatever you do, he knows it, or if you are naughty, for his eye is ever upon you."

"Philip would not be half so bad as he is," said

Louisa, "if Gracie did not make him so, for when she is not here he is very quiet."

"I hope that Gracie will not be naughty any more," said their aunt, "but try to be good, and, because she is older than her little brother, to set him a good example; and in that she will be doing God's work."

"What is 'sample, Aunt Fanny?" asked Grace.

"Behaving well before others, and so showing them how to do the same," replied Mrs. Preston. "You are very young, Gracie, but as you are not too young to sin, you are not too young to pray; and I am sure that when you feel inclined to do naughty things, like cutting up your mamma's silk, and such other mischief as you are in the habit of doing, if you would just think that God sees you, and would ask him to help you in your endeavour to be good, he would assist you, and you would soon get rid of your love of mischief and be happier, for everybody would love you better."

Norah now returned with the silk, and Mrs. Ainslie sent word to Mrs. Preston that the carriage was ready for them to take their usual ride. Margaret resumed her interrupted work, and was enabled to finish it, for Grace, seemingly impressed for the time at least, was less troublesome than she

ever had been in her life. Oh why did not the mother of those beautiful children try, from their earliest infancy, both by precept and example, to teach them to seek the favour of God and find their highest joy in his service—a service whose reward is a crown of everlasting life?

The Christmas came, and with it came George and Frank, accompanied by two cousins, and the house was filled with noise and merriment. Books, lessons, work, were all laid aside, for was not Christmas a season for especial enjoyment?

The Ainslie children were to have a Christmas tree and a dance on Christmas eve, but to their great vexation Mrs. Brooks anticipated them, and they were obliged to put it off until the next evening. On the morning before the party, Mrs. Ainslie, accompanied by Mrs. Preston, appeared in the nursery at an unusually early hour. A dress for Louisa to wear to the party was to be newly trimmed, and Margaret must lay aside the work with which she had been so much hurried, and begin the new one under Mrs. Ainslie's direction. All went on well for a time, until they were interrupted by an exclamation from Louisa and a terrible outcry from Grace. Louisa had been looking round for her scissors, which Philip had again carried off to cut

dogs and horses out of paper, when she found both him and Grace engaged in a new piece of mischief. Louisa had a box of water-colours, a present from her father, which she prized very highly, and she often amused herself by colouring small prints or the pictures in her books. Grace had more than once asked permission to use it, but Louisa refused on the plea that she always spoiled not only her own playthings, but those that were lent her. Grace was not easily baffled, and on this day, when all were so busy fixing dresses and discussing the party, she found an opportunity to climb up to the high shelf in the closet where the box had been put for safe-keeping, and appropriate it, as well as some picture-books, for her own use. She poured out some water in the wash-bowl, and, not knowing how easily the paints melted, she, aided by Philip, dipped them in the water until they were so softened as to be nearly dissolved. The books were ruined as well as the paints, and, somewhat frightened at the mischief she had done, she tried to replace them in the box, but in doing so she daubed her face, hands and apron with all the colours of the rainbow, looking more like a painted Indian than the beautiful child she really was; and Philip was in no better plight.

Louisa, usually so gentle, was startled out of all propriety when she saw the havoc made on her property, and in her anger boxed her sister's ears most soundly, which caused a terrible outcry. Mrs. Ainslie was at first alarmed, but afterward laughed heartily when she found what occasioned the noise and saw the ludicrous appearance of the two little culprits. Unheeding the distress of Louisa at the loss of her paint-box, she could have passed the affair over as a child's frolic, and taken no further notice of it than to order Margaret to wash their hands and faces and dress them in clean clothes, but the grave face of Mrs. Preston spoke reprovingly, and she felt herself obliged to reprove slightly.

"You are very naughty children," said she, "and I have a great mind not to let you go to the party; but you must be punished for such a piece of mischief, and so you must stay in the corner for half an hour."

There were symptoms of rebellion, which, if Mrs. Preston had not been present, would have conquered the weak and ill-judging mother; but she stood somewhat in awe of her aunt, and was therefore firm in carrying out her sentence of banishment to the bed-room. The outcries from

thence were very annoying, and Mrs. Ainslie, who hated trouble, was more ready to release them than to perform her duty of teaching them what was right, because the latter was the more difficult task of the two.

"It is a foolish thing to make a rout about," said she. "Louisa can get a new box to-morrow, and it worries me dreadfully to have to punish the poor little things for such a trifle. I'd rather they should destroy a dozen paint-boxes than be so disturbed as I am."

"That may be," said Mrs. Preston; "but, my dear Clara, it is your duty to teach your children what is right, no matter how much the exercise of the discipline which is intended for their good may pain you at the time of its performance. We have all of us duties, many of them unpleasant ones, which are indispensable, and a duty is not less a duty because it is painful; and, my dear niece, you must permit me to say that you are injuring your children by too much indulgence."

"Aunt Fanny," replied Mrs. Ainslie, "my children are no worse than those of other folks. All children are naturally full of mischief. And besides, Grace is uncommonly smart, and is so full of

activity that she must always be employed at something."

"I admit," replied Mrs. Preston, "that Grace possesses more than a common share of activity. All children are naturally active; but unless their activity be bent to useful purposes, it will only lead them into mischief; and much of that bent to mischief in children arises from the neglect of parents in not directing their activity into proper channels. The Scripture tells us to 'train up a child in the way that he should go;' and, my dear Clara, depend upon it, that in the way you train him he will go, whether you will it or not. And allowing the pleasure of being mischievously active and the pleasure of being usefully active to be equal, do you think that the consequences will not be different? If you permit a child to derive all his pleasure from doing ill to others, he will not, when he is grown up, be inclined to do much good."

"Well, if that is so, aunt, how is it to be helped? I wish my children to be amiable and good, but indeed, I cannot see anything very bad in Grace's mischief of this morning; indeed, I think Louisa deserved the punishment rather than these two noisy prisoners."

"Louisa's burst of passion does not excuse Grace,

nor Grace's doing what she knew was wrong in appropriating and injuring her sister's property excuse Louisa. But it is of your duty that I am now speaking. You ask me how Grace's propensity to mischief and self-will is to be helped?

"There is one means which is all-powerful to effect the mighty change which all who 'would see God' must undergo—the grace of God, which is a gift that, like all the other gifts of divine love, must be sought by the appointed means. It is the duty of parents to put their children upon the way of seeking it, and, as far as in their power, remove the obstacles that would prevent it. Begin in the nursery to prepare your children's characters. If the farmer were neither to plough nor sow his fields, nor root out the briers and thorns, and then expect in harvest, by the blessing of Heaven, to reap an abundant crop, every one would think him beside himself."

"But," said Mrs. Ainslie, "we intend to give our children the best of education, and I am sure that Margaret here in the nursery reads good books to them and tells them when they do wrong."

"That is all well as far as it goes, but something more is necessary. Can you imagine, Clara, that the human soul requires less care in culturing it

than is necessary to a farmer's field? Must not the briers and thorns of pride and self-will be rooted out from your children's minds before the good seed you say your nurse is sowing can thrive? No, Clara! I have noticed the bad effects of your blind indulgence on your children, and, for the sake of the love I bear to both yourself and them, you must forgive my plain speaking. The plan of preparation for their future welfare is nothing else than a watchful attention to the first appearances of what is in its nature evil, and, whether it comes in the shape of self-will, passion or perverseness, nipping it in the very bud; while on the other hand I would tenderly cherish every kindly affection and enforce attention to the feelings of others, by which means I would render children kind-hearted, tractable and obedient. The gospel, Clara —and you were brought up to reverence it—what does the gospel teach? Does it not urge us to subdue all selfish and hurtful passions, in order that we may cherish the most perfect love to God and man? Now, while you permit your children such unlimited self-indulgence, you are also permitting them to indulge these passions, and after these have taken root, how then can you hope to prepare them for practicing the gospel precepts? Their

duty to God and man requires that they should make the best use of every power of mind and body. The activity natural to youth is a power included in this rule; and if those whose duty it is to train them permit them to waste it in effecting mischief, and in destroying or disturbing the happiness of others, can they say that they are not counteracting the express will of our divine Master? You wish your children to be all that is lovely; but how, my dear niece, can you flatter yourself that with habits consequent on such ruinous indulgence, the divine precepts—without which basis no truly lovely character can be formed—will ever make much impression on their minds?"

"You view the matter quite too seriously, Aunt Fanny," said Mrs. Ainslie; "children will be children, let you do as you will. Let them be happy now, for childhood is the only happy period of life, and it is so short. Grace will in time get over this love of mischief and give up her self-will, and Philip, I am sure, is as good a child as can be found."

"Those who wait till evening for sunrise," said Mrs. Preston, "will find that they have lost the day. If you permit your children to disobey all counsel, and practice what they know to be wrong

now, they will never learn to obey God. But perhaps I interfere too far. If I do, you must forgive me, my dear Clara, for, with the great affection I have for you, whom your mother on her death-bed committed to my care, and the strong impression I have of the consequences of a right education, I am tempted to forget that my advice may sometimes be unacceptable."

"I could never be offended with you, Aunt Fanny," said Mrs. Ainslie, "let you say what you will; but we cannot see this affair in the same light now, so we will drop the subject."

In the mean time, the two little culprits had slipped slyly out of the bed-room, and were playing in a corner with as much indifference as if there had been no disturbance. Mrs. Ainslie was called away to receive a visitor and took no more notice of the misdemeanour, believing that they had been sufficiently punished. Before she left the nursery, however, she called them to her to give the "make-up-kiss," and asked Grace if she would not be good; and, instead of telling her where she was wrong, told her that she must get rid of her red eyes before she went to the party. Grace replied that she would behave well, and in the same breath asked what she was to wear; but Philip, when

asked the same question, answered that he was very sorry for having been naughty and spoiled Louisa's paint-box, but said, after his mother had left the room,

"It was Gracie's fault, Aunt Fanny. Gracie set me the 'sample, and you know you said she should set me the 'sample because she is the biggest."

"You are not to follow her example when it is not a good one," said Mrs. Preston; "and now, Gracie, see how much wrong you have occasioned by this one act of mischief. You made your little brother do what he knew was not right; you provoked your sister to unseemly conduct; you disobeyed your mother, who told you not to meddle with Louisa's things; but above all, you offended God by taking stealthily what belonged to another, and thereby breaking the commandment which says, 'Thou shalt not steal.'"

"I did not know it was so naughty," said Grace; "but Lou won't never lend me her things."

"Because you spoil and destroy everything, Gracie. Philip was naughty, too, when he took his sister's scissors without asking; and Louisa was naughty when she got into a passion and struck her sister."

"I was only cutting a cat," said Philip; "but I won't take the scissors without asking again."

"And I won't get angry again," said Louisa; "and I hope Gracie will forgive me for striking her."

"My dear children," said Mrs. Preston, "your resolutions are good, but you cannot keep them without a better help than your own. You must pray to your heavenly Father to help you; and if you do so sincerely, he will help you to be good."

The evening came, and Margaret found herself alone, seated at her work beside the sleeping infant. The silence of the nursery was oppressive. An unwonted stillness reigned throughout the house, broken occasionally by the distant sounds of snatches of songs sung by some revelers in the street or bursts of laughter from the kitchen, where the servants were having high holiday; and they fell painfully on her heart. She contrasted the Christmas of last year with the present to herself, and as she revolved the sad change and sorrow it had brought, she wept bitterly. A footstep was heard upon the stairs; she had hardly time to dry her eyes before Norah made her appearance.

"Margaret," said she, "they are having a nice

time in the kitchen. When 'the cat's away the mice may play,' and Hannah, who has some company, thinks it a shame that you should be the only one who cannot have some pleasure on Christmas eve. She baked a large cake for herself, and has a nice entertainment, and sent me to bring you down."

"I am much obliged, but cannot go," replied Margaret. "It is my duty to remain here to take care of the baby, who must not be left alone."

"The baby will sleep until you come back, and then where will be the harm?"

"You are never sure how long a baby will sleep; and if little Juliet should awake and find herself alone, she might be frightened and try to get out of the cradle. She did so the other day and hurt herself no little. Besides, Mrs. Ainslie expressly said that she did not wish me to leave the nursery, and therefore I have no right to do so."

"She need never know it, and then she could not be troubled about it."

"But I will know that I have deceived her, and God will know it, Norah; I should be troubled by the reproaches of my own conscience, and how could I expect God's blessing when I felt that I had wil-

fully disobeyed his command which says, 'Servants, obey your masters, with singleness of heart, fearing God.' It is my duty to obey and serve Mrs. Ainslie faithfully, not only when she can see and know it, for, if I do not fulfil my trust, how can I hope for the reward promised to those who do their duty heartily, as unto the Lord?"

"You have mighty queer notions, Margaret," said Norah; "do you really believe that God notices or cares for what servants do?"

"To be sure I do," was the reply; "for does not the Bible tell us that 'we must all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ,' to give an account of the deeds done in the body?"

"I never knew anybody have such queer notions; but, I must say, I think you a fool for your pains. Mrs. Ainslie does not think about pleasing God when she is killing you with too much work. She is determined to have her money's worth out of you, at any rate.'

"She has a right to that," was the answer; "and, as for all to take care of themselves is the way of the world, she is not so much to be blamed. Besides, if she is a little exacting, she is not ill-tempered, and pays good wages."

"I wish I knew, as you do, about these Bible

things," said Norah; "but I must go now, or some one will come after me."

After a time, however, she returned, with some work in her hand.

"I will sit with you, Margaret," she said, "until they come home. They are having great times down stairs, drinking Mr. Ainslie's wine, but what you said about deceiving, and God knowing everything, made me feel bad, and so I left them and have come to you."

Thus, by the blessing and aid of God's holy Spirit, Margaret was now enabled to practice the lessons she had learned at home, both from precept and example, and her own example and conversation were exerting a very great influence over Norah's mind. From a state of the greatest carelessness in regard to spiritual things, she began to realize that she too ought to be a Christian—that she too had a soul to save, capable of eternal happiness and glory. And with the "missionary spirit," which may, by God's blessing, like "the grain of mustard seed," produce in time great effects, it is in the power of all, brought up as Margaret was, to exercise in the families where they are called to serve. If but a very little good is done, by example or a word in season, to every fellow-

servant with whom such an one is brought in contact, it may be found at the "great day of reckoning" that those little sums amount to more than could have been hoped for.

CHAPTER XV.

BETTER THAN DIAMONDS.

WHEN Mrs. Ainslie and her little troop returned from the party, which was at a rather late hour for children, Grace and Philip were cross and sleepy, and Margaret had no little trouble in getting them to bed. The usual duty of prayer had to be dispensed with; Philip could not keep awake, and Grace would not do anything she was told, but crept into bed and was sound asleep in a minute. Louisa was much excited, and, completely carried away by the charms of the scene in which she had mingled, could talk of nothing else.

"I wish you could have seen how elegant it was, Maggie. The children danced so beautifully, and I was so ashamed that I could not dance, but mamma said that Gracie and I should be taught before Christmas. And the big ladies—how grandly they were dressed! You ought to have seen how elegant Mrs. Hartly's diamonds were; but mamma

says they are not real diamonds, but only *make-believes.* At any rate, they were very grand, and I intend to ask papa for a set of diamonds as soon as I am big enough to wear them. Oh, Maggie, do you think there is anything better than having diamonds?"

"I know very little about diamonds, for I have never seen a single real one in my life," was the reply. "But when we lived in N——, we got a great many tracts and had them bound into a book, which I have in my trunk. In it I read a pretty story, which told that there was something better than diamonds."

"Tell me the story, Maggie; I should like to know what is better than diamonds."

"Not to-night, for it is time you were in bed and asleep; I will read it for you some day soon, when I have time. But now, Miss Louisa, try not to think any more to-night about parties and diamonds, but endeavour to say your prayers without any wandering thoughts, for if your prayers are not said carefully and earnestly, they are but a mockery."

The next day found Louisa languid and unwell. She complained of a sore throat, and Mrs. Ainslie directed that she should lie on the sofa in the nur-

sery and keep quiet, so as to be ready to appear at the party they were to have in the evening. Thus confined whilst the others played noisily through the house, she reminded Margaret of her promise about a story. The book was brought, and the tract—which we have abridged—was read as follows:

BETTER THAN DIAMONDS.

On a cold day in the winter of 18—, Mr. N——, an old gentleman well known in the religious world, was standing in the broad, crowded street of a large city. It had rained, and although the the sun shone brightly, long icicles hung from the houses and the wheels creaked as they passed over the ground. The sky was clear and bright, but there was a keen north-west wind blowing, which, although bracing, quickened every step. As he stood looking at the passers-by, a little child came running along—a poor, ill-clad child of about eight years old—without cloak or shawl, and her little feet, hardly covered by her old shoes, looked red and suffering. She held a little bundle in her hand, and as she ran shivering past the old gentleman, her foot slipped upon the ice and she fell with a cry of pain, but she held the bundle tightly in her hand, and jumping up, tried to run as before,

although she limped sadly. "Stop, little girl," said a sweet voice, and a lady, wrapped in a large shawl and enveloped in costly furs, came out of a jewelry store close by.

"Poor little child!" said she; "are you hurt? Sit down on this step and tell me."

"Oh I cannot," said the child; "I cannot wait, I am in such a hurry. I have been to the shoemaker's, and mother must finish this work to-night, or she will never get any more shoes to bind."

"To-night?" said the lady; "what is the haste?"

"Yes," replied the child, "for they must be ready for the great party to-morrow night; the slippers are to be spangled, and—"

The lady took the bundle from the child's hand and unrolled it. The old gentleman could not imagine why her face flushed and then turned pale, but he looked into the bundle too, and saw a lady's name written on the inside of the slipper, and then he knew.

"Where does your mother live, little girl?" she asked.

The child named the place, and also said that her father was dead and that her little brother was sick, and that her mother, who was very poor, bound shoes that they might have bread; some-

times they were very cold, and her mother often cried because she "had no money to buy milk for the sick baby."

The lady's eyes were full of tears as she rolled up the bundle quickly and gave it back to the child; but she gave her nothing else, not even one sixpence, and, turning away, went back into the store from which she had just come out. Her shawl had, as she stooped, become disarranged, and as she drew it up around her Mr. N—— was attracted by the sparkle of a diamond pin which fastened her collar. She returned presently with a jewel-case in her hand, and, stepping into a handsome carriage which stood at the door, drove off. The shivering little girl looked after her for a moment, and then, with her little half-naked feet looking colder than they did before, ran quickly away. Mr. N—— was interested, and followed the little girl, keeping at a short distance behind her, until he saw her go down a damp, narrow street and into a small, dark room, where her mother, sad and faded, but with a face sweet and patient, sat hushing and soothing her sick baby. The babe was given to the little girl, the bundle unrolled, and the mother, with the help of a dim candle, pursued her work; for, although it was not

near night, her room was very dark. She bade the little girl warm her poor frozen feet over the scanty fire, gave her a little piece of bread and heard her say her evening prayer, and, kissing her for good-night, she blessed her and told her that the angels would take care of her. The child slept and dreamed such pleasant dreams of warm stockings and new shoes, but the mother sewed on alone, and, as the bright spangles glittered on the satin slippers, did no repining come into her heart? When she thought of her little child's half-naked feet and scant morsel of dry bread, came there no visions of a bright room and splendid dresses and a table loaded with all that was good, one little portion of which spared to her would comfort and make her so happy? If such thoughts came, and others—of a pleasant cottage and of one whose strong arm had kept them above want, but who could never come back—they did not come repiningly, for the old gentleman heard her say, as she clasped her hands, "Father, thou doest all things well, and I will trust thee." Just then some one came to the door, which, being opened, admitted two persons, one of whom, a plain-looking woman, carried a large bundle; the other was a young lady, who, with a large basket on her arm, looked as if

she had just come from market. Her dress was plain; no feathers graced her bonnet nor gayly-trimmed cloak attracted the public gaze; no diamond pin or costly ornaments were worn to add to her beauty. The ornament of the gospel spirit was her only adornment. She went to the bed where the children were lying and covered them with the soft warm blankets which she took from the bundle her companion carried. The basket was emptied, and bread, meat, milk and other good articles of food were placed upon the table. Then going up to the widow, she drew the unfinished slipper from her hand and bade her eat and be strengthened.

"No thanks are due to me," she said, as she laid a sum of money to buy fuel in the poor woman's hand; and her voice was like music to the widow, who could hardly find words to express her gratitude. "I am but doing as my Master has commanded, and am paid in the pleasure in obeying the command—the command of Him who bade us minister in his name. Bless God, rather, who is the helper of the fatherless and the widow."

She left hastily, and as she went out was heard to say, "*Better than diamonds.*"

"Miss Mary," said her companion, "what will

your aunt say when she finds you have not bought the diamond ring with the money she gave you?"

"She will not care when I tell her that I used it for something 'better than diamonds.'"

"But your Cousin Mary will appear in her diamonds to-morrow night, and you will look so plain beside her."

"I shall not regret that when I recall the image of that widow as she sat over her work with tearful eyes, and blessed God for the help sent by me."

The party was at the house of a relative of Mr. N——'s; so he went to it. The rooms were brilliant with light; there were music and dancing and sweet flowers; young, happy faces and beautiful women, richly dressed and sparkling with jewels; but he did not know any of them, except the lady whose name was written on the slipper, and whose diamonds and spangled satin slippers sparkled in the bright light. But, after a while, another group of young persons passed him, among whom was one whose dress was of simple white, and whose voice was like the sweet sound of a silver lute. No spangled slipper glittered upon her foot, no diamonds flashed amid the masses of her dark hair, but she moved as one that treadeth upon the air, and the divine beauty of holiness had so glorified

her face that Mr. N—— felt, as he gazed upon her, that she was indeed as an angel of God, and he could not help repeating aloud the words he had heard her utter, "*Better than diamonds—better than diamonds.*"

"That is a pretty story, Maggie," said Louisa; "still, I must say, it is very nice to have diamonds; but if the diamonds are only 'make-believes,' as mamma says Mrs. Hartly's are, I think, maybe, I would rather be in the good young lady's place than in her cousin's."

The evening came, the tree was lighted and the rooms filled with company, and the juvenile dissipation was kept up in various houses nearly every night until the holidays were over.

When the boys came home, they had brought with them two pets—a young spaniel and a tame crow—which were a source of great amusement in the nursery for a time. Jolly had been taught quite a number of tricks, but the crow, who had received the name of "Black Peter" from his master, George, was the greater favourite of the two, on account of his being able, as the children said, to talk. Both had free access to the nursery, and had behaved well until the day before the boys

were to go back to school, when they perpetrated a piece of mischief which brought them into disgrace. Grace was very careless of her playthings, but Mrs. Preston had given her a large wax doll at Christmas, which she prized above any present she had ever received, and accordingly took more care of. On the day above mentioned, Jolly had upset the doll's cradle and dragged the waxen lady by her satin dress round the room, and Black Peter, joining in the sport, had picked her eyes and made a most unsightly hole in her nose. Grace flew to rescue her doll, but the attempt was not made without some difficulty; the spaniel barked his displeasure at the interference, but the crow resented it in a more summary manner, for he bit the little girl's finger until the blood flowed. Her loud outcries alarmed Mrs. Ainslie, who came at once, condoled with Grace, reprimanded Margaret for not preventing the mischief, pronounced sentence of banishment on the two culprits, and told the boys their pets must be given in charge of the gardener, who lived at the foot of the lot, until they returned. This sentence was at once carried into effect. The boys went back to school, and by degrees the usual routine of life was resumed in the Ainslie family.

CHAPTER XVI.

MYSTERY AND SUSPICION—LESSON OF THE FIRE-FLY *

ANOTHER spring came, warm and genial; the buds were bursting into leaf, the hedges bright with wild flowers and the garden filled with green-house plants, and, greatly to the delight of the children, they were permitted to play in the open air. Jolly and "Black Peter," released from imprisonment, although not suffered to enter the house, were once more their playfellows. The crow was rather a favourite with the gardener, who hung up his cage on a tree, but leaving it open, "Black Peter" went in and out at pleasure. Crows do not like to be confined, and finding himself at liberty to go where he pleased, Peter availed himself of the favour, and accordingly passed much more of his time amid the branches of the sycamore that overhung the nursery windows—which were now often open—than he did within the limits of the garden or bars of his cage. There was about

* Translated from the German.

this time a great deal of uneasiness in the family on account of the disappearance of several articles, most of them being of more than ordinary value. Tea and salt-spoons were missing.. Mrs. Ainslie had lost two rings from the nursery-table, where she had forgotten them; Louisa could not find her gold thimble—Aunt Fanny's Christmas gift—and blamed Grace for having lost it; and Margaret, although always careful and anxious, could not imagine where the gold clasp of the baby's sleeves had got to. The servants of course were suspected, but nothing could be discovered. At length suspicion fell on a little boy, the son of a poor but very honest washerwoman, to whom Mrs. Ainslie allowed the cook to give broken victuals; he was in the habit of coming every day for what would otherwise have been thrown away, which was of great importance to his mother; but now he was taxed with being the thief, and accordingly forbidden ever to enter the house again. Nevertheless, the depredations still continued, although the missing articles were of less value than those above named, and Mrs. Ainslie was puzzled. She talked a great deal about the dishonesty of servants, and suspected all, but took no steps to discover the missing articles.

One day, as she sat in the parlor talking with

Mrs. Preston, two ladies were announced. The conversation turned on that fruitful subject of complaint—namely, the trouble with servants.

"I am without a cook," said Mrs. Brooks; "these servants are the greatest plagues! they will positively wear my life out."

"Why, where is Hannah, whom you have had so long?" asked Mrs. Ainslie.

"I turned her off at a minute's warning for her insolence. She was an excellent servant, but I won't bear insolence. I ordered her to do the work of the chambermaid, who had a sore throat, and she refused, saying she could not do it. She had often done it before, but it seems that she and Jane were in a quarrel, and so she would not oblige me for fear of obliging Jane, to whom she had not spoken for a week. I sent her right off, but I was in a terrible fix, with Jane sick and everything to do myself. After a few days I got a cook—an Irish girl—who said she could do everything, and I believed I had a perfect treasure, but I only kept her two days. She was very quiet and neat-looking, and I did not do much on the first day but overlook her; and everything was so nicely done I was sure she was as competent as she said she was; therefore, on the next day I let her have her own way. We

are all fond of radishes, and having bought some in market, I told Biddy we would have them for tea, but when she called us and we took our seats at the table, no radishes were there.

"'Why, Biddy,' I asked, 'where are the radishes? I do not see them.'

"'Sure, ma'am, I biled them, and there they are,' and pointed to a queer-looking mess. 'Wasn't it right?'

"I was too angry for anything, and I bade her go down into the kitchen and eat her supper and then pack off, which the stupid thing did without saying a word."

"Indeed," said Mrs. Dalton, "these foreign servants are dreadful things—they get so high. I had an excellent German girl, but she got to dressing too much lately, and, what was worse, she tried to get everything the same as I had. One day I met her in the entry, going out of the front door, dressed for a walk, with a parasol exactly like mine. I thought perhaps she had borrowed mine, and asked where she got it? 'I bought it,' she answered, very saucily. 'It is very unsuitable for one in your condition,' said I, and then gave her a lecture on wearing such unsuitable clothes. She answered that she had a right to spend her money

as she pleased, and told me to look out for another girl, and so went off at once."

"I know," said Mrs. Ainslie, "that servants are very trying, but I am more fortunate than you have been. I have one who really does the work of two people, and sometimes of three, for she is not only the baby's nurse, but teaches the other children, and has saved me the expense of a seamstress ever since she has been here."

"But then you must give her more than double wages," said Mrs. Brooks; "but folks who do so much work seldom do it well."

"I give her good wages," said Mrs. Ainslie, evasively, "and she is an exception to the general rule: she does her work well."

After the ladies had departed, the conversation relative to the trial caused by her servants was continued by Mrs. Ainslie and her aunt. The former observed that the affair of the radishes, although laughable, was very provoking, and she thought that Mrs. Brooks did perfectly right to dismiss the stupid creature at once.

"I do not think so," replied Mrs. Preston; "I cannot excuse Mrs. Brooks as readily as I can the poor girl, who did wrong from ignorance rather than intention; for, in sending her away at such an

hour and in such a way, when perhaps the poor girl had no home to go to, she did not obey the scriptural command, which bids the strong to bear with the infirmities of the weak, and not (to seek only) to please themselves, as so many think only of doing. It is not always easy to be forbearing, for there are a great many careless and some unprincipled servants; but I think there are many mistresses, too, who do not make allowance enough for those who are ignorant, but drive them off, as Mrs. Brooks did, on every trifling occasion."

"That is true enough," said Mrs. Ainslie, "but more than half the time it is the servant's fault. It is not easy to put up with insolence."

"It certainly is not; but if every lady would consider the servants engaged in her household as beings brought to her by the providence of God, she would try in a missionary spirit to exert such an influence over them as might in time produce a wonderful effect. If such an exertion did not render them at once what they ought to be, it could not fail to make them better than they would have been without it; for though it might be only one step forward, it would be so much gained. Why so many refuse to do any little things which they consider it not their places to do, or serve just so

far as they think best for themselves, or that so very few feel any anxiety about the interests of those they live with, is because they think that their employers try to get as much work from them as they can and at as low wages as possible."

"But it was very insolent in Hannah to refuse to do Jane's work when Mrs. Brooks told her to do it."

"Perhaps Mrs. Brooks spoke in a manner which touched the girl's pride, and she refused to obey a command when she would readily have fulfilled a request. She had no right to *exact* obedience in this case; she might request, but not command. A servant will only be submissive in those things in which he has agreed to obey you, or respectful so long as you fulfil your obligations to him; he only agrees to obey in everything that concerns the service he has undertaken, and it is unjust and absurd to expect servants to labour for you beyond their strength, or to do another's task unless they are paid for their extra work. And of this latter, Clara, are you not yourself guilty? You admitted that Margaret did the work of two servants, sometimes of three, yet you only give her the wages of one. This is unjust. I have long wished that you could see that close confinement and incessant ap-

plication are injuring her health; without a change she will break down ere long."

Mrs. Ainslie was startled. She liked Margaret, and would have been sorry to think she had wronged her. But, considering servants as an inferior class, she never troubled herself to care whether they were well or ill, provided they did their work; and was perfectly satisfied that no domestics were so comfortably cared for as her own. She replied, she "did not see that anything ailed Margaret, who never complained; and she was sure could not get a better home if she left her; and she had no idea of humouring servants every time they were a little unwell."

"There is no need of humouring," Mrs. Preston said, "but only to do right. Masters and servants stand mutually in need of each other, and so it is to the advantage of both that the former should be kind and the latter respectful. Oh, Clara, absorbed in their own interests, pursuits and pleasures, how fearfully callous are even the best to the emotions or eternal welfare of others! As they hurry along the broad and business-crowded road of life, how few pause to think that each heart has its own mighty world of feelings, its struggles, passions and temptations; that each has

a separate soul an individual existence—the one 'priceless, peerless talent' of a life to improve!"

Mrs. Ainslie was so far influenced by what her aunt had said that Margaret was next day sent with the children to the square. She seated herself on one of the benches, while the baby slept on her lap, watching over Grace and Philip as they drove their hoops up and down the walk. Louisa, who never cared for active sports, soon grew tired, and came and sat down beside her.

"Look there, Maggie!" she exclaimed; "look at that poor little girl; she seems as if she wanted something." And as she spoke, the child, as if she read sympathy in her face, came quite near and stretched out her hand with a motion not to be mistaken. Her clothes were clean, but scanty and poor; her sun-bonnet had fallen back, and showed her thin face, which was covered with a deep blush as she spoke a few unintelligible words, and which told that she was unaccustomed to beg, Margaret spoke kindly to her, and the child, after telling where she lived, said that her mother, who bound shoes and sewed for a living, was sick, and they had nothing to eat all day, and she had to beg just to get some bread, for they were so hungry. They had come from the country when their father died,

for her mother could not get anything to do there, where so many did their own work. But she had to work so close that it had made her sick, but if she got well they would go back to the country. Margaret gave the child something, and Louisa, who was always well supplied with pocket-money, gave all that she had in her purse; Grace, too, contributed her mite, but she had laid out most of her money in cakes and candy, and the little girl's eyes sparkled as she surveyed her gains.

"Oh just come now and see mother; it is quite near—just down that court. She will thank you so. Maybe I won't have to beg again, for mother says it is disgraceful."

"Oh, Maggie, let us go!" exclaimed Grace and Louisa at once; "it is time to go home now, and that'll be just in our way."

The little girl lingered; she wished that they should see her mother. But Margaret turned a deaf ear to their entreaties, although they were urgent:

"No; your mamma has strictly forbidden that you should be taken anywhere but to the square. She is afraid you may catch some disease."

"And then you won't look after the poor things?" said Louisa, in a tone of reproach.

"Not now, at least," was the reply. "We must never do one duty at the expense of another; and my first duty in this case is to obey your mother."

Just then she heard some one calling her name, and, to her great surprise and pleasure, found it was Martha Harding, who was out on an errand for Miss Marshall. Nothing could have been more opportune than this meeting. The little girl, who was still beside them, told her own story. Martha accompanied her to her home, and, finding that all she said was true, she reported the case to Miss Marshall. The invalid lady delighted in acts of benevolence, and Margaret not long afterward had the pleasure of hearing that the widow had left —— court, and was set up in a little shop, by which she made a comfortable living. Louisa, for the first time in her life, experienced the luxury of doing good.

"Maggie," said she, "when I saw that little girl looking so happy when we gave her the money —and it was so little—I felt happy too. I could not help thinking of the story you read me the other day, and now I am sure that the pleasure of doing good is 'better than diamonds.'"

CHAPTER XVII.

LESSON OF THE FIRE-FLY. THE PARTY AND THE "MAKE-BELIEVES."

"MARGARET," said Norah, as she came into the nursery one morning quite early, "you must go to Mrs. Ainslie's room and sew all day, and I have to mind the children. You are wanted to help Miss Dixon, who has been there for an hour, to get the new dress that came from New York ready for Mrs. Ainslie to wear to Mrs. Hartly's grand party to-night."

Margaret found Miss Dixon at work; every chair and table was covered with costly materials for dress, and Mrs. Ainslie was examining a large box of beautiful and expensive French artificial flowers. At length she selected a bunch which she declared suited the colours of her new dress just as exactly as if made on purpose to be worn with it.

"Did you ever see anything more perfect than those white roses and purple campanulas? Just look, Margaret—you love flowers so well—how

lovely they are, and made of such elegant materials! All silk fabric—no cotton about them. Tell William to take them back to Madame Leroy's and tell her which one I have selected, and that she must be sure to have my head-dress ready by four o'clock, or I shall not patronize her again."

It was a hard day for Margaret; the weather was oppressively warm. She was languid and suffering from a severe headache; still, she did not complain, but sewed on until after dark, when the dress was completed. Nor was the poor worn-out seamstress in much better plight, but such things happen every day where people are selfish. The head-dress was sent at the specified time and pronounced perfect; and equally satisfied with the dress, Mrs. Ainslie surveyed herself in the tall mirror, and, in high good-humour with her own appearance, went to the party, never once thinking or caring that her pleasure had been obtained at the price of suffering by others.

Margaret, wearied and depressed, went to the nursery, but found no one there but a little girl, who was playing with the baby; but she heard the children's voices in the garden, and she went to seek them there. It was against the rules for them to be out after dark, but there was some company

in the kitchen, and Norah, taking advantage of the bustle of getting ready for the party, and intending to remain but a few minutes, went down stairs, telling the children they might play in the garden a little while longer, and satisfied her conscience by sending Lucy, the cook's little niece, to watch the baby. Margaret found the children in high glee, chasing and catching fire-flies, which they had done so successfully that Louisa and Grace had stuck them on the long combs with which they kept back their hair, making them look as if spangled. As Philip wore no comb, they had ornamented his face in like manner, never taking thought of how many of those insects they had killed, or how sinful it is to waste the life even of the meanest creatures, for life is a gift which, although man may take away, none but God, the great Creator, can bestow.

"Don't we look nice in our spangles, Maggie?" said Louisa. "You know we read the other day of the ladies of South America wearing fire-flies in their hair, and I thought it was so pretty; and so it is. Don't you think it is, Maggie?"

"No," said Margaret; "I cannot think anything is pretty when I know it is wrong; and it is not only wrong but sinful to waste life unnecessarily.

I remember once, when my sister Mary and little Anne Brown did the same thing, what a lecture our father gave them on the subject. He told them that the same great Being who made themselves and the immense sky, which, filled with stars, was above and around them, formed also the little insects which are often trodden under foot; and how sinful it was to deprive them of the life that God had given and which they could not restore. And then he told them a little story, which he said was found in a German book, telling about a poor family to whom a little fire-fly was made an instrument of Providence, serving, as he said, to show that God notices the most insignificant of his creatures, and can make them ministers of his will."

"Oh tell us that story, Maggie!" said Louisa. "I did not think that God cared for such poor little things as fire-flies. I should like to have heard your father talk. He must have been very good, for you tell us so many pretty things that he said."

Margaret made no reply, but, taking little Philip by the hand, told them that, as it was their bed-time, they must now go at once to the nursery. Great was the surprise of Louisa and Grace to find

that their spangles had vanished as soon as they came in the light; nothing but little gray spots were found in their place.

"Oh, Maggie," begged Louisa, "tell us that story while you are washing the fire-flies off Philip's face and fixing him for going to bed?"

"I have a bad headache and am very tired," said Margaret; "but I will tell you the story, for you may think of it some time when you see children killing flies or insects, or torturing anything which God has made. I cannot tell it as my father told it, but will do the best I can:

"A poor widow, whose name was Maria, sat one evening of a hot summer day at an open window, looking out on the little orchard which surrounded her cottage. The grass had been mown in the morning, but the hot sun had dried it, and she had already gathered it into heaps, and the sweet smell of the hay blew into her little room as if to refresh her after her labour. Little Fritz, her only child, a boy six years old, stood leaning against the window-frame, watching the moonlight as it fell on the trees and made everything visible. The heat had made labour oppressive to both, but a heavier burden rested on the widow's heart, and made her forget how tired she was. The boy was sad too,

for he knew that they had eaten their last supper in their happy home, and on the morrow they must leave it, for it was to be sold. Maria was a pious and industrious woman, and was greatly respected by her neighbours. Her husband, a most worthy man, had by his industry saved enough to buy the little cottage with its meadow and orchard; they had lived happy together until the last fall, when an epidemic fever broke out in the neighbourhood: both were seized by it, and her husband died. Their long sickness and the funeral expenses had more than exhausted their slender means, and she found that she must now part with her little cottage. Her husband had worked for a man who esteemed him highly for his industry and honesty, and had lent him part of the money to buy the cottage, on condition that he would pay off the debt partly in money and partly by labour. Until the year that he was taken sick he had faithfully performed his agreement, and the debt was now only fifty dollars. The creditor, however, died of the same disease in the same week, and his heirs found the note for the original sum among his papers, but no account had been taken of the payments made. The poor woman knew that the debt was nearly paid, but as she had no writing to prove it, the case was

tried and decided against her; the heirs insisted on payment, and the time appointed for the sale had come. As she sat at the window weeping, little Fritz came to her and said:

"'Mother, do not cry so, or I can't talk to you. Don't you remember that father said, God is a father to poor widows and orphans, and told us, too, that he would help them if they called upon him in their trouble. This is what he said, and is it not true? If it is, I am sure you ought not to cry so. Pray to God, and he will help you.'

"'My good child, you are right,' said his mother, and her tears flowed less bitterly, for there was comfort mingled with her sorrow. She folded her arms round her boy, and the bright moon shone down on the mother and child as they prayed together.

"'Mother,' said little Fritz, breaking the silence that ensued, 'look! what is that? It is a star flying. See, it is coming in at the windows. How light and pretty. What is it?'

"'It is a fire-fly,' said his mother. 'In the daytime it is a small insect not at all pretty, but in the night it gives out a most beautiful light.'

"'May I catch it?' said the boy. 'Will not the light burn me? or will it hurt me?'

"'It will not burn you or do you any harm. Catch it, but do not hurt it. It is one of the wonders of God's almighty power.'

"The boy, entirely forgetful of his sorrow, now tried to catch the bright insect, but could not, for it flew everywhere; but at last, just when he thought he had it, it flew under the large chest which stood against the wall.

"'I see it quite plain,' said the boy, as he looked under the chest. 'Look! there it is, shining, close to the wall, but I cannot reach it. Mother, please let us move the chest a little; I won't hurt the little thing.'

"The mother complied; the boy took the quiet fire-fly and examined it in the hollow of his little hand. But, as his mother moved the chest, something which had stuck between it and the wall fell upon the floor. It was her husband's account-book, which, as she could not find it, she believed had been destroyed, as being of no use, by strangers who had been about her while she was so ill. She lighted a lamp, and, as she turned over the leaves, found that everything was correctly put down, and a receipt written on the last page, in the creditor's own hand, that all was paid except fifty dollars. How her sorrow was changed into joy!

for now it could be shown that the money was paid, they need not give up their home.

"'See, my boy,' said she, 'nothing comes by chance. Even the hairs of our heads are numbered; not one of them falls to the ground without the knowledge of our heavenly Father. Remember this as long as you live, and put your trust in him at all times. It is easy for him to aid and to save. God does not need to send a shining angel to us, but has sent us help by a poor little insect.'

"She could scarcely wait until the dawn appeared; the magistrate lived at some distance, but when the first streak of light showed that the day had arisen, she at once went to him, and to her great joy found him at home. She told her tale, and he at once sent for her creditor. He came and acknowledged the writing was genuine, and was very sorry that he had injured her and given her so much trouble. The magistrate, who was a just man, declared that he owed her some recompense for the shame and sorrow he had caused her. This the young man was at first unwilling to make, but when the poor woman had related the whole account of the evening before, and the appearance of the fire-fly, the magistrate said:

"'The hand of God is here; he has visibly helped this poor woman.'

"The creditor's heart was moved, and he said, kindly:

"'Yes, it is so; God is the father of the widow and the fatherless, and their avenger also. Pray forgive me; I release you from the payment of the fifty dollars, and if again you are in need, come to me. I now see clearly that God never forsakes those who trust in him, and that confidence in him is better than great riches. And if I ever come to want, or my wife should be a widow and my children orphans, may he help us even as he has helped you.'

"And now, Miss Louisa," added Margaret, "I will only say to you what father said to us then: 'Despise not nor seek to hurt the smallest or meanest creature that lives, for His hand created them, and in his providence can make them ministers of his will.' So let us always trust in him, and try to act upright, and then we may claim the fulfilment of the promise that help will be granted in the time of need. But Grace and Philip are both asleep, and it is time for you, too, Miss Louisa, to go to bed."

"I could listen longer," said Louisa, as she

obeyed her nurse; and, kneeling down, she said her prayers with a sincere wish to do right, and, lying down with a mind at peace with all, she fell asleep almost immediately.

On the evening of the party, Mrs. Ainslie had worn a set of jewels by which she set great store, but which, with her usual carelessness, she had left lying in an open box on her table, where they remained for some days. At length she discovered that one of them, an amethyst brooch, was gone, and also a costly piece of lace. Search was made in every place they were thought likely to be, but all in vain—they were not to be found. Mrs. Ainslie was greatly vexed, and reprimanded Norah sharply for the carelessness which was her own, and in so doing made some intimations which wounded the poor girl and roused her spirit, so that she repelled the insinuations in a rather unbecoming manner. Norah was a good servant, honest and capable. She had been with Mrs. Ainslie for a long time, and proved herself trustworthy in a degree above the common. But Mrs. Ainslie, although she prized the girl's services, was among those persons who seem to believe that servants have no feelings, and therefore in her resentment at Norah's "insolence," as she called it, forgot herself in her

angry accusations. Norah, although very ignorant on the subject of religion, was possessed of acute sensibilities and great pride of character. This made her superior as a servant, and she did her work well, out of respect to herself as well as duty to her mistress. But she now declared she would not stay another day in a house where she was suspected of dishonesty, and accordingly left at once without a recommendation, Mrs. Ainslie, in her anger, refusing to give her one.

Margaret was very sorry to see Norah go; she liked her for her many good qualities, and pitied her for her ignorance, and strove to do her good. Norah, after her angry fit was over, was sorry too, but, in spite of every argument and entreaty, she would not stay. Margaret's conversation and example had exerted a great influence over her mind, and for some time she had begun to think that she too ought to be a Christian, and regretted that she had given way to the sallies of temper which had caused her to leave the salutary atmosphere in which she had lately been living. She was sincerely attached to Margaret: she had often served or met with girls who were kind-hearted, obliging and possessed of various good qualities—some even professing to be followers of the Saviour—but she

had never before been intimate with one who governed herself by Christian principle, sought to regulate her conduct by the will of God and discharged her daily duties as under the All-seeing eye. Nor were the lessons or example ever forgotten. She found a place with one who had ever in view the future good and happiness of her servants, and thus the little seed sown by the missionary spirit of a humble servant-girl was fostered until it grew and produced fruit even to sixty-fold.

The girl who came in Norah's place was not one with whom Margaret could be intimate, for she found her frivolous and untruthful. She, however, soon won Mrs. Ainslie's favour by her adroit flattery, and by knowing how to do up her laces and dress her hair to perfection.

Although there had been a constant round of gayety in C—— that summer, Mrs. Ainslie had given no party, preferring to put it off until she returned from her annual excursion. She was absent some weeks, and finding that all had gone on well at home, and in high good-humour with herself, she determined to give a party on a grand scale. No trouble or expense was to be spared; her purse allowed her full freedom, and her large, elegant house was the very place where she could

exhibit her intended triumph and overpower her guests with the magnificence of her entertainment. Her rooms were admirably adapted for the projected display. The two large parlours were decorated to receive the guests; but a third room, belonging to the suite, was to be arranged differently. The whole upper side of this room, and in full view from the parlours, was partitioned off with evergreens, and looked like a forest; in the middle of this a platform was raised, on which was placed a miniature fountain, from whose sparkling jets, as the water fell back into the basin below, a spray was formed, which kept fresh the few natural flowers Mrs. Ainslie had been able to procure, and, tastefully intermixed with evergreens, turned the platform in front of the fountain into a miniature flower-garden. The space between the windows where it stood was filled up by a deep arch or grotto, made of the branches of green spruce, extending over the platform and fountain, and, with the flower-garden, ornamented as it was with statuettes, had a beautiful effect.

There was one great want, however, which Mrs. Ainslie had not once thought of. It was so late in the season that very few flowers could be had from the gardens, and none of her green-house plants

were in bloom. An expedient, however, presented itself. Artificial flowers must supply the place of natural ones, and to do so would be easy. Paper flowers had lately been introduced, and although largely used by the fashionable world in cities, had not yet been seen in C——. Anne, the new servant, had lived in the family of a French lady in N——, who made a living in this way, and was quite an adept in the art. The materials were at once sent for to N——, and, Margaret assisting, a quantity was made in a very short time, and with no small degree of skill. Roses, camellias and a great variety of other flowers sprung up under their ready hands, and, under Mrs. Ainslie's direction, were so neatly fastened on the green-house plants that, unless most closely observed, the cheat could not be detected.

The flower-pots were then arranged within the grotto or placed to advantage round the room, and shielded from too close an approach by a network of wire, painted white, somewhat resembling an ornamental fence, and added greatly to the beautiful effect. Bunches of these paper flowers were placed among the evergreens, and wreaths of the same hung over the parlour windows at such a height that they could not be examined. The afternoon

came, the arrangements were completed, and Mrs. Ainslie, anxious to see the effect by artificial light, had the windows closed and the rooms lighted up. It was a complete success, and the whole family was called in to witness the grand display. Louisa, who had been staying in the country with her aunt during Mrs. Ainslie's absence, had that day returned. Mrs. Preston accompanied her, but, notwithstanding her niece's entreaties, would not consent to stay for the party. She was ready to leave when the family was called to admire the completed work, but, at Mrs. Ainslie's request, went into the decorated rooms with the rest.

"What do you think of my 'make-believes,' Aunt Fanny?" said Mrs. Ainslie, laughing; "do you think any one will find out that they are only made of paper? I am sure they look quite as well, at a little distance, as natural flowers."

"They certainly are very pretty, and your whole arrangement is both tasteful and beautiful. But why do you call them 'make-believes?'" said Mrs. Preston; "you certainly do not intend your guests to *believe* they are natural flowers?—that would be deceiving."

"They may think what they please," was the reply. "I know no one will know that they are

only paper flowers, and I am sure, after taking all this trouble, I am not going to tell them. But you look so serious, Aunt Fanny; surely you don't see any harm in such a trifling deception."

"I do see harm in it, Clara, for all kinds of deceptions are wrong, and you may be well assured that we can never deceive without injuring some one, and that there can be no unfair advantage which is not gained at the expense of some one."

"But really, aunt, this 'make-believe' matter is so very trifling."

"True, it is a very trifling case, but the principle is the same, for deception is intended," said Mrs. Preston. "There is but little or no difference between the acted and the spoken falsehood, and in the wish to gain praise for having flowers in such perfection you are exacting unmerited praise. There is no harm in having those paper flowers, which look very beautiful; the harm is in misleading people to believe that they are genuine when they are not. Uprightness and honesty ought to be practiced in the most trifling as well as the greatest things in life, and there is always insincerity in an endeavour to obtain admiration by false seemings or subterfuge of any kind."

"Why, Aunt Fanny," said Mrs. Ainslie, "you

talk as seriously as if I had done something dreadful. These things are done every day; life is made up of seemings and appearances. Almost everything in the world is false and 'make-believe,' like Mrs. Hartly's diamonds. To be altogether sincere would be very troublesome, for it would keep us constantly watching ourselves and others. I suppose what you say is true, but I am not any worse than my neighbours, and it has not put me at all out of conceit with my 'make-believes.'"

"Do not be offended, Clara, if I say, farther, that first, we display very little respect or consideration for ourselves when we stoop to deceive others in order to be flattered, or complimented, or envied for having elegances above our neighbours; secondly, these kinds of stratagems, when they are discovered—and they are oftener discovered than people imagine—may overwhelm with ridicule, or even with shame, and the most trifling untruth exposes to a risk far greater than the pleasure it procures if successful. And then the example: children cannot be taught too early to reverence the truth, which they will not do unless they see it practiced as well as hear it taught."

The children were standing close by while this conversation was going forward. Would time show

that any part of it was remembered? We shall see.

It was a brilliant spectacle when Mrs. Ainslie's rooms were lighted up, and a gay party assembled to admire and wonder and envy the display created by wealth and taste. Mrs. Ainslie, who had forgotten Mrs. Preston's lecture, made herself particularly agreeable, and enjoyed in full the triumph she anticipated. It was so delightful to be complimented on the great taste and beauty of the arrangement, and to hear the remarks made on such an exhibition of flowers at a season when every one was regretting that summer was nearly over; but she told no one that the flowers were unreal. The children, in their best dresses, flitted everywhere around the rooms, first joining one group and then another. Grace attracted particular observation, as, beautifully dressed, she ran about listening or talking in perfect liberty. The evening was well advanced. Everything had gone on smoothly when the little girl approached a party of ladies, who, standing beside a refreshment-table, were discussing other matters than the good things heaped upon it.

"How much taste Mrs. Ainslie has!" said one; "nothing can be prettier than these rooms."

THE "MAKE BELIEVE."

Page 339.

"It is very easy for her to entertain in this way," said another; "she has a long purse."

"It is a great display of purse-pride and vanity," chimed in a third; "it must have cost a great sum to buy all these flowers."

"I wonder where she got so many," rejoined another; "she must have bought out all the greenhouses in the country."

Just then the speaker's eye fell on Grace:

"Oh, come here, you pretty one, and tell us where did your mamma get so many beautiful flowers?"

"Oh," replied Grace, "they are not '*sure-enough*' flowers; Anne and Maggie made them of paper. Mamma says they are only '*make-believes*,' like Mrs. Hartly's diamonds."

An embarrassed silence was the consequence of this disclosure. Mrs. Hartly, whom Grace did not know had been the last speaker, made some indifferent remark and moved away to another part of the room; and the child, unconscious of the mischief she had done, ran off to amuse herself elsewhere, leaving the amused group to discuss the "make-believe" diamonds and flowers to their full content, and to make themselves merry over the mocking and what they called tinsel splendour of

both. Of what worth, then, is such petty ambition? The world has no respect for its worshippers, and even when it most smiles upon them, it is the most inclined to censure or make sport of their folly. Before the evening was over, the affair of the "*make-believes*" had gone the round of the company, and before the evening of the next day one of those *kind friends*, whom almost every one has, had told her all. Poor Mrs Ainslie! Where was her triumph now? In proportion as she had been elated, so was she now mortified, and somewhat humbled she acknowledged to her aunt "that after all truth was better than seeming." But not less irritated than mortified, she declared that she would never give another party, and that she would punish Grace for what mischief she had made so severely that she would remember it as long as she lived.

"Clara," said Mrs. Preston, in whose presence this threat was made, "would you punish your child because, in the guilelessness of childhood, she spoke only the truth? If you do, you will punish her for that which arose from a fault of your own. Punish her now, as you say you intend to; give her a lesson 'she will never forget;' it is likely she will not. Child as she is, she cannot discriminate,

and she will remember how to conceal truth and act or speak falsehood, as it may be expedient, without regard to the approval of Him who 'keepeth truth for ever.' Remember, it is for you to write upon the yet unsullied tablet of your child's heart; and be careful how you suffer an ineffaceable blot to be made upon it, rather than stamp it with the impress of those precepts which teach that the 'lip of truth shall be established for ever, but a lying tongue is an abomination to the Lord, while they that deal truly are his delight.'"

Mrs. Ainslie listened respectfully, for there is a dignity about religion that the most worldly are obliged to acknowledge; but, although she did not punish Grace as she threatened, she was determined to let her *friends* know what she thought of them. She had, however, not much time to think about the matter; for the first time sickness came into the house, and Mrs. Ainslie's anxiety was fully awakened. Anne, the new servant, was mostly allowed to take the children out in the evenings, instead of Margaret, who had for some time suspected that she took the younger children with her to visit her friends, and that she bribed Philip and Grace, with presents of candy, not to tell. Louisa would not have concealed the truth, but she did

not often go out with Anne, whom she did not like; and when she was with them they were never taken farther than the squares.

A day or two after the party, Anne entered the nursery with the beautiful purple flowers, previously mentioned as adorning Mrs. Ainslie's cap, in her hand.

"You are to put these flowers in the box with the others," she said, addressing Margaret—"the box which is on the high shelf of the nursery closet. The cap was left on the table in the dressing-room, and I found it lying on the floor nearly torn to pieces, so the flowers had to be taken out. Mrs. Ainslie is a good deal vexed about it, and one of her elegant sleeve-buttons, which she wore on the night of the party, cannot be found. I have searched everywhere, and she bade me tell you to look if she had not dropped it in the nursery."

The flowers were put away as directed; the children were sent out with Anne. During their absence the nursery was swept and examined, but no sleeve-button was found. When they returned from their walk, which was much sooner than usual, little Juliet was restless and fretful, and, as she had seemed drooping ever since the party,

Margaret began to feel anxious, although she scarcely knew what she apprehended, and told her fears to Mrs. Ainslie, who was not alarmed.

"Children of her age are often fretful and peevish," she said, "and I do not see any cause for uneasiness."

But on the next day the symptoms of illness became more apparent; a red flush was spread all over her face and her little hands were hot and dry. The unconscious eyes and burning head and drooping limbs convinced the now alarmed mother that Margaret's fears were well founded, and that it was something more than an ordinary ailment; and she hurried anxiously to consult a friendly neighbour, whose more practiced experience would be better able to estimate the cause for alarm.

It was soon found to be serious enough—the child was really ill. Dr. Harrison was hastily summoned and pronounced a verdict of scarlet fever, and Mrs. Ainslie was overwhelmed with despair. She had the greatest horror of the disease, and would not listen to a word of comfort or hope, or believe that her child would ever recover. The whole household was in distress, and, by way of crowning the trouble, Mrs. Ainslie, having found out through Grace that Anne had taken

them to a house where they saw sick children, was highly indignant, and, without considering or caring that her services were at this time indispensable, or the difficulty of finding a suitable person in her place, dismissed her on the spot. The disease developed rapidly in a most alarming form, and in spite of every precaution the other children were attacked also. It was some time before a nurse could be obtained; most of the few who were willing to serve in such circumstances were incompetent and found to be hindrances rather than helps. They were sent off as summarily as Anne had been.

Mrs. Ainslie, who had seen but little of sickness and was very inefficient as a nurse, was nearly broken down under this accumulation of misfortune. Not one of her fashionable friends came near her, for they were afraid of the fever; and had it not been for the good nursing of Mrs. Preston and Margaret, the children would have fared badly. The latter forgot that she was so much out of health herself; her mind was so full of anxious care for the little sufferers that self was lost sight of, and she watched beside them day and night without seeming to feel fatigue or pain. No one seemed to possess the same power to soothe the moaning children; she

had a thousand little arts and devices to cheat them of their pain, and no one else was able to persuade them to submit to the doctor's rules, or coax them to swallow the bitter medicines he prescribed. Hour after hour she walked the room with one or other of the two least in her arms or rocked them on her lap, singing in low, murmuring tones to the two elder ones, which lulled them into quiet when all else had failed. With the most watchful and unwearied patience, she exercised all the arduous duties required in a sick-room, so that even Mrs. Ainslie yielded her approbation, and for the time showed such an appreciation of her services as made her heart swell and her eyes fill with tears of gratitude to God, through whose goodness she had been qualified for the responsible task. Dr. Harrison, too, a man of piety and benevolence, who had attended the Gordons in all their sickness, often expressed his satisfaction at the manner in which she performed her fatiguing duties, and would say to Mrs. Ainslie, "I think I shall have to take Margaret from you and engage her to nurse my patients."

With these well-merited praises from those who had witnessed her perseverance in the discharge of duty, it was not wonderful that she felt lighter-

hearted than she had been since she had left her home for Mrs. Ainslie's service. Her present happiness, however, was not the result of self-complacence, but proceeded from a hope that by a faithful fulfilment of her obligations to her employers she had won their affection and confidence. She trusted that whilst serving those who were fellow-creatures she had also served God, from whom, as doing all service heartily as unto him and not unto man, she should receive the reward promised to those who do their duty, not as men-pleasers, but in singleness of heart, fearing God. She recalled all that her father had said about God's allotment of our duties and stations, and realized that it was by no mere accident or chance, but by his all-wise providence, that she filled the place of a servant, and was thankful that he had given her faculties to fulfil its various duties. She felt that, in her late exhausting efforts, she had performed her required duties in a right spirit, and trusted that she had his approbation—the highest reward that any one can hope for. Her station was lowly, but her conduct was of importance. He who watched the monarch on his throne watched her also in her humble duties; and whilst she thought of the mercy which had all along been vouchsafed to her,

and told all her griefs and trials to him whom she so long ago had been taught to love and trust, the heaviness of her heart changed into calm rest, and she enjoyed seasons of that sweet, holy and unspeakable peace which the world can neither give nor take away.

It was not until the appearance of symptoms which confirmed the doctor's verdict, that the fever was abating and the danger past, that she felt how much exhausted she was, and resolved to go home as soon as she could with propriety leave her post. The children grew better slowly, but surely; and, as fears for their safety subsided, the household fell back into the old social habits which had for a time been interrupted. Visitors came and went as usual; Mrs. Ainslie renewed her rides and drives and frivolities; the evenings were mirthful again, with music and pleasant company; and, with her return to the old habits, the lately appreciated services of Margaret were forgotten. Her former selfishness took the place of her recent gratitude, and she exhibited only another proof of how little to be depended upon is the favour of those whose hearts are given up to the world. Notwithstanding the gradual recovery of the children, and consequent lessening of anxiety on that account, Margaret's

duties were still too arduous for the state of her health, and she had more than once told Mrs. Ainslie that she must go home and rest for a while. The answer to this proposal was, that she "did not know how to spare her at this time," accompanied by an entreaty that she would not go until some one could be found to fill her place; and Louisa was so weak and languid and loved Margaret so much, she surely would not go until she was better, the poor child would fret so?

Margaret had become attached to the children, and notwithstanding the great need she felt she had of rest, was reluctant to leave, and suffered herself to be persuaded to stay. Louisa had suffered greatly from the disease, and as it reached its crisis there was little hope that she would survive. At last, however, she arose from her sick bed, and gradually regained power to move and walk about. Mrs. Ainslie now thought all danger was over, and returned to her frivolities and pleasures, quite easy about the convalescing children, and satisfied that Margaret would not neglect them. But she did not notice, as the faithful nurse did, that while Dr. Harrison encouraged her respecting the speedy restoration of the three younger children, he still looked grave and shook his head when he asked

about Louisa and examined her pulse. Margaret felt sad as she witnessed the doctor's discouraging manner, for the gentle little girl had won much upon her affections; perhaps the interest was deepened by an impression she had always had that her life was likely to be one of suffering, if not a short one. Often, before she was taken sick, she would draw her little chair to Margaret's side and beg her to read or sing to her, and tell her about her uncle Preston, who died; how much she had loved him; how he had taught her to say "Our Father" and other prayers, and would tell her about heaven and all the bright and happy beings who lived there; and then Margaret would read her stories from the Bible, and tell her of the greatness and goodness of God, and of the blessed Saviour, who left his home in heaven and came upon the earth to suffer and to die, that sinners should be saved from the punishment due to all the children of Adam.

As Louisa recovered gradually from her sickness, during which she had thought a great deal, she took more pleasure in these conversations relating to heavenly things even than before. She seemed to love particularly to hear about dying and going to heaven; and the humble nurse,

from the home-teaching of her pious parents, was able to fulfil a missionary function, and teach the interesting child the things of most importance for human beings to know. She told her of heaven, the home where the Saviour dwelt, "brighter than the sun, more vast and more glorious than the broad blue sea," where no sound of sorrow was ever heard, where no feeling of pain was ever endured. Millions of angels knelt before his throne and worshipped him for his unspeakable greatness, and not one among them had ever known a thought of sin. In that home there was room for us, but only on one condition—if we come to God believing on him who died that we might inherit heaven.

"Well; but, Margaret, could not we go to heaven at all if our Saviour had not died for us?" asked Louisa, one day, when they were conversing on these spiritual things.

"No, Miss Louisa," was the reply; "we certainly should not. It is only because he suffered and died as he did to save us from the curse brought on us by the sin of our first parents that we have any title to the happiness of a better world. And how often do you think of what he has done for you and love him for it?"

Louisa did not immediately answer, but after a short pause she said:

"It is very hard always to be good; it would be so much easier if we could see the Saviour. But, Maggie, did he really leave heaven and come to earth to die?"

"Yes," was the answer; "he came upon earth, which, even in its greatest beauty, was to him but a land of darkness, and lived in poverty and shame among the sinners he came to save, and loved those who persecuted him. And when he had taught them all that it was good for them to know, and healed their diseases, and helped them in their difficulties, he gave himself up to a death of agony to save them, and all who believe and trust in him, from punishment."

"I should like to be very good, Maggie," said Louisa, "but I think it is very hard to be always good. And then I am so young; mamma always says that Grace will be good when she grows older, and I think it will grow easier for me by and by."

"I hope so," said Margaret; "but no one grows good or merits heaven without help from above, and there is nothing but prayer for God's assisting grace that can keep us safe from sin. You are not too young to sin; neither are you too young to

pray; and if you pray and try with your whole strength, God will give you his Holy Spirit and make you a child of grace."

Thus was the humble nursery-maid made an instrument for the edification of some of those among whom she lived. She found, as Mr. Upton had told her, that she could do her Master's work in whatever situation she was called to, and, carrying the missionary spirit into the nursery of the rich, she sowed the seeds of truth which in time brought forth even to sixty and a hundred-fold. These gospel teachings created a strong bond of love between the child of wealth and the humble nursemaid. A tie was formed between them of whose strength the latter was not conscious hitherto; but now that the idea of suffering and danger, so plainly prognosticated by Dr. Harrison's looks and manner, was presented to her mind, she did not so strenuously insist on being dismissed as she would otherwise have done, and, forgetful of her own failing health, resolved to remain near Louisa as long as she possibly could. She, however, overrated her strength. She did not improve, although buoyed up by the strongest motive—disregard of self in the discharge of high duty—a lesson she had been learning to practice throughout her life. But

a separation came sooner and continued longer than she expected; a sadder and sterner experience to be passed through before a complete victory could be gained and a complete triumph over self achieved. One evening, as she sat beside the baby's cradle, she was seized with a sudden faintness, and would have fallen but for the aid of the assistant nurse. Mrs. Ainslie, who was in the nursery at the time, was much alarmed for a few minutes, but as the faintness passed off her alarm subsided, and she thought no more about it until the next morning, when she met Dr. Harrison coming from the nursery, where he had made a visit.

"You will have another patient in a few days," said he; "your nursery-girl is far from being well, and just in a fit state to take a fever. She has great need of rest just now, and as she wishes to go home for a while, you had better let her go at once."

The idea of having another fever patient in the house was most terrifying to Mrs. Ainslie, and fright effected what entreaty and consideration failed to do. She went at once to the nursery, and in a tone of coldness, seeming almost like one of displeasure at the poor girl for daring to be sick and thus obliging her to dispense with her services,

she gave her a hasty dismissal, although she had no one engaged to fill her place. Her short-lived gratitude for the devoted attention shown in the children's late sickness, and which the doctor said had done as much for them as medicine, had already been forgotten, and Mrs. Ainslie, as she noticed her nursery-maid's pale face and drooping form, was as anxious to hasten her departure as she had been a day or two previous reluctant to part with her.

Selfish people may be very soft-hearted, and when Mrs. Ainslie saw Margaret's devotion in the sick room of her children, and how she bore with all their peevishness and contradictions, working beyond her strength to humour their fancies or soothe their sufferings, she said—and was sincere at the time—that she would never forget the service she had rendered, and that Margaret had a lasting claim on her for gratitude. But she was also one of those persons who expect to receive all, but do not care to give anything in return. Every one around her was to do everything for her especial comfort, but she never thought of herself putting aside personal inclinations for the duty of making others happy. As we have already said, unless much provoked, she never used harsh language

to her servants, and provided even kindly for their personal wants: she did it from pride and because she loved the praise of men; and whilst she exacted the utmost amount of labour in return, thought they had no right to complain of the absence of that sympathy which, as children of one great family, each human being owes to the other, let his rank be what it may. Servants, working for daily wages, were only menials, inferiors; she cared nothing for their future good or happiness. Living for a select, exclusive circle, and viewing everything through a worldly medium, the large circle of the Christian Church, embracing within itself all orders and all ranks, and giving to each class and each individual in that class a work, without which the happiness of the whole could not be complete, was as much unreal to her as were the myths of the ancient historical records.

She knew nothing of the higher blessedness bestowed by the teachings of Christianity, which bid us not to despise those to whom God has assigned more humble positions than ourselves, "knowing who it is that hath made us to differ." And there are many like her, who, in the pride of wealth and arrogant superiority, care not for, nor seem to have

an idea of, the relative duties incumbent on every class, but complain of their servants for evincing so little interest in the household affairs of those with whom they live. But sympathy, in the small details of every-day life, insensibly reaches and tells on every heart, and is the real source of influence; alms may be given to the poor and high wages to the hireling without finding the wished-for result of affection and gratitude until the heart is reached. "Man does not live by bread alone," is a sentence which has a meaning even short of its spiritual sense; there is a germ of feeling in every human breast, which springs into existence in the sunshine of another's sympathy—a flower which God has planted, and which may be found "blossoming in the midst of apparent barrenness, like the Alpine rose in the depths of the glaciers." Being one of the number who have never learned that the poor can feel, it is not to be wondered at that Mrs. Ainslie consented to Margaret's leaving her service in the manner of one feeling herself much injured; for, knowing well that her place could not be easily filled, was not her domestic comfort to be sacrificed by the change? And yet she was anxious to be rid of her; she wanted no sick people in the house. In her present irritated

mood, which had taken the place of her short-lived gratitude, although she could not help seeing how really ill her faithful nursery-girl was, she suffered her to walk home, carrying her bundle, although she had more than one carriage at her command. Poor Mrs. Ainslie! there are many like her, who, forgetful of the higher nature that is within them, live only for the world. But God is ever merciful, although chastening in his love and often severe in his dispensations for good. The flinty heart was yet to be struck; the selfishness in which it was encased, caused by too much prosperity, was yet to be removed, and the healing waters were to flow with a soft and tender influence; but it was to be at the call of sorrow and the stroke of death.

CHAPTER XVIII.

HOME AGAIN, AND AN UNPLEASANT SURPRISE.

TIME is certainly not to be measured by days and hours, at least if we consult our own sensations; for, although to Margaret and perhaps to the other watchers in the sick room, it had seemed an age since the party had come off, which was in late summer, it was yet early in autumn when she received her ungracious release from Mrs. Ainslie's service. It was on a brilliant morning, with a bright sun clouded just enough for beauty, that, with a small bundle in her hand, she took her departure from the luxurious home, where she had learned some painful experience, and commenced her long walk toward her mother's humble cottage. A new nursery maid had been engaged, with whom Mrs. Ainslie believed she would be quite as well served as she had been by Margaret, and she had therefore directed that, as it was her intention to set out at an early hour, the leave-taking should be on the evening before. But the faithful and Christian

servant could not leave her little charges with quite as much indifference as the fashionable mother supposed. They had, by the blessing of God, improved much under her care. She had taught them to love and fear God and how to pray, and, in the true interest inspired by her own loving faith, she feared that the seed she had so carefully and unremittingly sown should, for lack of proper care, perish and come to naught, instead of the sixty-fold increase for which she hoped. Mrs. Ainslie, dissatisfied because of her being obliged to leave, which disturbed her indolent ease, had not asked her to return, and when she had kissed the children "good-bye" and turned away from the nursery, she did not know whether she might hope ever to see them again. Many thoughts concerning them and all she had experienced since she had exchanged her humble home for this lofty mansion took possession of her mind and made her restless. Sleep would not visit her pillow until at so late an hour that she did not awake at her usual time, and her departure was in consequence much delayed. She, however, after partaking of a morning meal with Hannah, the cook, and taking a friendly leave of her and the other servants, set out through the back gate and down the lane that ran

along the garden wall to the high road, from which it was separated by a stile. Having reached this, she, to her great surprise, saw the three elder children issue from the lower gate of the garden. Bounding over the stile, they clung affectionately to her, as if unwilling to part.

"Why, Miss Louisa," said Margaret, "how did you find out that I had not gone an hour ago, as I intended? Surely your mamma does not know of this. She would not approve of your coming down the lane alone."

Louisa did not speak, but Grace answered without hesitation:

"I saw Hannah, and she told us you had just gone. We did not ask mamma, for we knew she would not let us come to see you on your road, and she don't know that you did not leave long ago. But we were allowed by the new nurse to play in the garden, for the doctor says the open air will do us good, and so we ran round the back way, and have just come of our own selves."

"You should not have done so, Miss Gracie," said Margaret, caressing the child, who was twining her little arms so lovingly around her; "you must never do anything you know your mamma would not approve of, even if she did not forbid it. Dear

Miss Louisa, won't you try and remember that when you do things that you know she would not like, and without her knowledge you break the fifth commandment, which says, 'Honour thy father and thy mother,' you also disobey God and offend him by breaking his law? But now, darlings, run home like good children, and tell your mother that you came to the stile to say 'good-bye' to me once more; and," she continued, as she caressed them most affectionately, "I'll maybe come back to see you if your mamma will allow me."

"Oh, I am sure she will," said Louisa, clinging to her fondly; "and you must come back and live with us again, for I know mamma will want you, for I often have heard her tell papa and Aunt Fanny that she did not know what she would do in the nursery if you were to leave us."

"Don't go away, Maggie," said Philip; "I'll be afraid of Indian Peter again if you won't stay with us."

"You must not be afraid of anything, Philip, but of doing wrong by disobeying your parents and offending God, who, if you pray to him with your whole heart, will not suffer anything to harm you."

"Oh yes, Maggie," said Grace, "do come back. I do not think I will like our new nurse at all; she speaks so sharp, and ain't a bit like you."

"You must try to like her, Miss Gracie, for it is your duty to do so; and now, darlings, good-bye, and be sure never to come away again without asking your mother's leave."

They turned sorrowfully away, and Margaret stood by the stile and watched them until they disappeared behind the garden gate. Tears flowed down her cheeks as she thought that perhaps she should never see them again, or at least that the bond which had united them was now severed, never to be knit again; and although she rejoiced at the prospect of speedily being with the loved ones at home, it could not relieve the sadness she felt at parting with them. She thought over her many experiences since she left her cottage home for one in the dwelling of the rich; and as she recalled the memory of the conversation with her father, which we have already related, on the subject of riches—riches which she then so ardently desired, believing them to have the ability to bestow happiness on their possessor—she also remembered how on that occasion he had said, in the beautiful language of Scripture, that "a man's life consisteth not in the abun-

dance of the things which he possesseth;" and all her varied experiences there had verified the scriptural assertion which says, "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!" She wept bitterly—not because the change would be great between her rough country life, which she must once more resume, and the more refined but not less laborious employment at Mrs. Ainslie's, but from the thought of how much she would miss the caresses and companionship of those little ones whom, for so many, many months, she had in her own humble way been endeavouring to train for heaven. She did not know how inexpressibly dear her young charges had become to her until now when she was about to part with them. Thrown entirely upon her care in their late dangerous illness, they had awakened the warmest sympathies of her nature, but her greatest interest in them proceeded from the marked improvement which characterized their whole behaviour since her first coming among them. Philip, instead of being rude and noisy, was docile and gentle, and Grace, though still wild and mischievous, had become more truthful; but it was Louisa who gave the best promise that her humble teachings had not been without effect. She had found the "trail of her duties," as

Mr. Upton had told her to do, and, following it in a missionary spirit, she put her whole heart into the work—not for the sake of the work, but of Him who gave it to her to do; and having done the service in this spirit, she trusted that he who scans the inner motive rather than the outer action had noticed and blessed the effort, although it was made by a humble and feeble hand. She had had many trials in that service, but it is by trial in the fire that gold is proved; and her memory travelled readily back to them, and she recalled the many steps by which she had reached the point of life where she now stood. Her life at Mrs. Ainslie's had not been a very happy one, but it had been good for her, for she had learned many lessons there—lessons which, remembered through life, would elevate her mind in sorrow and sober it in joy, and she thankfully acknowledged that the discipline had been good for her; and she did not allow herself to wish one trial altered or think it better that there should have been one trouble less, for are not man's light afflictions, which, as the apostle tells us, "endure but for a moment," intended by the wise Dispenser of joy and sorrow to work out an eternal weight of glory for those whom he loves? She had learned to estimate riches

at their true value, and therefore did not desire their possession, as she had formerly done almost to covetousness. She had better learned how to distinguish truth from error—how to bear unmerited reproach in silence, following the example of One who, when reviled, reviled not again; and in the annoyances of her daily life had learned patience and acquired a spirit of gentleness and submission, which, as we have before said, formed no part of her natural character.

The morning was bright and beautiful, uniting the warmth of summer with the freshness of autumn, making the mere sensation of being in the open air enjoyable. How pleasant was the walk between the still verdant and well-filled fence-rows that bordered the road on each side! The change from the confined air of the nursery to that of the pure breeze wafted from the mountains, the bright, clear sky, the sight of healthy, happy faces and the sounds of active, busy life, were all invigorating, and it would have been strange if our poor servant-girl, always so fond of country life, should have been insensible to its influence now. There was a charm in the landscape, clothed in its autumn richness, in its fertility, its air of wealth and peace—a charm in the splendour of the varied tints of red

and green and purple and gold of the many-coloured fields and woodlands, all speaking the power and goodness of the Creator, and showing forth the littleness of man and his works in comparison with the vastness and grandeur of Nature.

But although Margaret breathed more freely, she did not enjoy her walk as much as formerly; her spirits were depressed, she had a dreadful headache, which she attributed to her want of sleep on the previous night, and, with a sense of lassitude heretofore unknown, felt herself to be seriously unwell, and feared that she would not be able to reach home. But putting forth all her energies, she succeeded, and surprised them all there, not only with her unexpected arrival, but with her altered looks, for which they were not at all prepared. They greeted her with joyful words, but she did not appear to hear them. A band of iron seemed to encircle her head, her thoughts wandered, and everything grew dark before her. She was, however, not altogether unconscious, for she was aware of the voices of the loved ones who surrounded her, and, yielding to a sense of security when she found herself placed on her mother's bed, she experienced, amid unutterable exhaustion, a glow of grateful joy. A pleasant stupor began to steal over her;

and, thanking God that she was at home, she fell into a sound sleep.

Although she was not able to rise for several days, her sickness was not a dangerous one, proceeding more from the exhaustion consequent on her overtaxed strength than real disease. Perfect quiet, recommended by Dr. Harrison, was the only medicine she needed. Lying there at rest, on an uncurtained bed, very different from the one she had occupied in Mrs. Ainslie's nursery, feeling that she was watched over and cared for, a sense of deep peace came over her. Too weary and too weak to think of either the past or the future, and sensible only of the safe and blessed present, and the goodness of God, who had given her a peaceful home, she gave herself up to the full enjoyment of an interval of that languid repose which, in such cases, exhausted Nature demands for herself.

Margaret's restoration was gradual but very slow. Some weeks passed—during which time she had heard nothing of Mrs. Ainslie, who had never sent to inquire whether she was sick or not—before she was able to take an active part in the household duties. She remained weak and pale, but was anxious to resume her service again, for the debt was not yet all paid, and that very anxiety aided in re-

tarding her recovery. Notwithstanding she had had much to complain of in her life at Mrs. Ainslie's, she would have preferred returning to her rather than entering into the service of another family where all were strangers. She had become attached to the children, and missed their companionship, although when with them she had often found them very unruly and trying to her patience. But she did not know whether Mrs. Ainslie wanted her or not, and could not help feeling hurt at the indifference she had manifested, when she could have so easily sent to ask after her; knowing, as she did, that loss of health, from over-exertion in her service was the occasion of her leaving. But there was no need to decide hastily; she was still far from having recovered her usual state of health, and her mother was unwilling she should go until she was stronger. Whilst she was thus hesitating as to what was or was not duty, they were all greatly surprised by a visit from Mrs. Maxwell, who was once more living in Philadelphia, and whom they had not seen for a long time. She was troubled to see Margaret so changed in looks from the time she had seen her last; feared she was going into a consumption, and at the close of her visit insisted on taking her home with her.

"It shall cost you nothing, Alice," she said; "I will pay all expenses, and will be glad to have her on a long visit. I am often lonely since my daughter is married. She needs recreation; so you must not refuse."

After some hesitation the proposal was accepted. Margaret had never been to Philadelphia. Change of air and the novelty and variety of city life could not fail to be beneficial; and besides she need not regret the loss of time, since her health was by no means so far restored as to render it prudent for her to seek another service. She accordingly accompanied Mrs. Maxwell to her city home, and, although there were no young people there—for her aunt's children were all settled in homes of their own—she found all she wanted in the company of her uncle and aunt, who, equally pleased with her, wished that she would remain with them altogether. The offer was a tempting one. Mr. Maxwell was in good business, and she would live an easier life than she had ever yet known; but the claims of duty were imperative. She believed that at this time her efforts ought to be devoted to the interests of her family, and she felt that she must not neglect the performance of a *positive* duty for that of a *possible* one; and, with a mind en-

lightened and enlarged beyond her years by true religion, she was enabled to discern what was right in this case and sacrifice self at the shrine of duty. She therefore resolutely withstood the tempting offer, but consented to remain for a time, or until her health was so far re-established as to admit of her once more seeking employment.

A few days after her arrival in Philadelphia her aunt proposed that they should together visit her daughter, who lived some miles distant in the country.

"We need not send any word," she said; "we can go in the public conveyance until quite near the place, and walk across the fields, which is a shorter way than going by the road."

The morning was bright and pleasant when they set out, but the sky became overcast and lowering long before they reached the place where they were to leave the coach. Soon after they alighted some raindrops began to fall, which increased to a heavy shower before they left the fields and reached the lane which led to the house, into which, being unprovided with umbrellas, they entered in a dripping state. They received a hearty welcome from the surprised inmates of the farm-house, and they were soon made comfortable; but after their

rain-soaked garments had been carefully dried and otherwise attended to, it was found that Margaret's bonnet was so much spoiled that it was doubtful if it could ever be restored to a state of decency.

James Gordon had never approved of the practice of wearing mourning; therefore none of the family except the mother had ever changed their style of dress, which had always been scrupulously plain. Margaret's bonnet was a white straw trimmed with a green riband, which, soaked by the rain, had liberally distributed its colour in many stains, which it was doubtful it would be possible ever to remove. It was, however, dried and fitted up, by the help of a veil, so that she could wear it home. Mrs. Maxwell sustained no injury from the wetting, but Margaret, less robust from her late confined life, had taken a severe cold, which confined her to the house for several days, so that, when her aunt went out to see if the bonnet could be restored and the stains removed, she could not accompany her. She was troubled at the thoughts of the expense, perhaps, of getting a new one. The loss of time, and being obliged to consult a physician on the state of her health, would much retard the accomplishment of the end she had in view—namely, the payment of the debt; and she

was sad as her alarmed and morbid fancy painted the probability that after all they might have to give up the cottage. After a short absence, Mrs. Maxwell returned, bringing with her the stained bonnet.

"I went to several places," said she, "and every one I spoke to declared that nothing could be done with it. The green stains could not be taken out. But I have bought a new bonnet for you, and hope you will wear it. It is a present from your uncle; and although it is a little—only a very little—gayer than the spoiled one you have been wearing, you must not object, for he says you dress too plainly for a young girl, and I have selected one that I know will please his taste."

The bonnet came, and Margaret could not help expressing her admiration of it, but at the same time she feared that it was too gay for her to wear. Her father had often told his children that they ought always to dress according to their station and means, and although he was no longer on earth to object or to censure, she held all his well-remembered opinions in great reverence.

The new bonnet was made of white straw, and trimmed with a beautiful purple riband and a bunch of artificial flowers, a white rose and purple

campanulas, somewhat resembling those which Mrs. Ainslie had worn in her head-dress and prized so much; but, made of far less costly material, they were greatly lower in price. Margaret, although she could not help admiring the bonnet, which was simple and in such good taste that she could not object, would have preferred it without the flowers. She loved flowers dearly, and was not opposed to seeing them worn by others, but somehow she thought them unsuitable to one in her station. Mrs. Maxwell read her scruples in her face, and said, perhaps a little impatiently, that she was in Philadelphia now, where all young people dressed more than those who lived in the country. She yielded to the views of her aunt, who, besides the bonnet, had made her many other presents, thanked her warmly for her kindness, and wore the flowers in order to please her, intending, however, to take them out of her bonnet as soon as she was at home.

Thus kindly treated by her relatives, and feeling that health was returning, she spent her time in peace and contentment until, in a letter received from her mother, she learned that Mrs. Ainslie had been more than once at the cottage and wished to have her return to her service. She then began to consider the propriety of going home,

and at once prepared to do so, although every inducement was offered for her to stay.

But while Margaret was thus peacefully passing her time with her kind friends, things had not gone on altogether smoothly in the Ainslie family. The children did not like the nursery-servant who succeeded Margaret, and quarrelled with her continually. Although for the first week she had pleased Mrs. Ainslie so well that she told her friends that she thought her quite as good a servant as Margaret, she soon found that she was careless and unprincipled, and therefore dismissed her, as was her custom, without a recommendation. Several others succeeded, but Mrs. Ainslie was not satisfied with any. Some were good in some things, but none, she was obliged to acknowledge, were so efficient as Margaret, about whom the children were constantly inquiring, and begging, particularly Louisa, that she might come back; so that she at last visited the Gordon's cottage, and, to her great surprise and regret, learned of her absence.

The depredations in the Ainslie family, before spoken of, still continued, but not to the same extent as formerly. Mrs. Ainslie had become more careful of her jewelry and locked it up; and as no

valuable articles had been missed lately, and the petty thefts were mostly confined to abstractions from the work-baskets and the play-room, she was too indolent to trouble herself to care about them. On one occasion, however, she suffered herself to become very angry, on account of a loss which was comparatively a trifling one. She was to go to a party, and in considering what style of head-dress she should wear, she thought of the beautiful purple and white flowers she had worn with so much pleasure in the earlier part of the season, and which she recollected had been ripped from her torn headdress and been given to Anne to hand over to Margaret. But on examining the box in the nursery closet, where Margaret was directed to put them, they were not only not there, but several other bunches of the expensive artificial flowers which Mrs. Ainslie was in the habit of wearing were also missing. She cared little for the loss as far as regarded the expense, but she wanted that particular flower at that particular time; and, as she went to every pains to get another like it, without success, she suffered herself to be more worried about it than was at all habitual with her, and yielded to a display of temper never exhibited heretofore. She taxed her servants roundly for the lately-committed

thefts, and the consequence was, that they became offended and left, and placed Mrs. Ainslie in such a dilemma as she had never before been; she felt herself perplexed to the utmost. It was then that she thought of Margaret; she had, as we have before stated, felt a kind of gratitude to her for the devotion with which she attended her sick children; but—with that selfishness which, like the sand of the desert, drinks up all and returns nothing, and is the characteristic of all such world-loving people as was Mrs. Ainslie—her short-lived feeling of obligation to one who was "only a servant and had been liberally paid," soon vanished, and she permitted her to leave her house, suffering as she was, without manifesting any more interest in her welfare than if she had been the hireling of only a day. But now, troubled and perplexed, her thoughts reverted to the late faithful nurse, and she had, therefore, driven out more than once to the cottage in order to procure Margaret's services once more.

There were many consultations held between the family and friends after her return as to what was best for her to do. She was young, and had so far recovered her health that the probability was that she might live for years, and in the circumstances in which God had seen good to place her, she was

appointed to labour—that was the appointed duty of man—to labour not only for herself, but for the good of her family, and also to glorify God in the performance of the work he had allotted her. She would have preferred a school to service; but the season had gone by for making application whilst she was in attendance upon the sick children, and although Squire Green's relative—who had the school formerly taught by her father, and still kept it—had failed to give satisfaction, and most of the patrons would have been glad of exchange, his influence was not to be gainsaid.

They had not been able to decide on any settled course, when, one day, as Margaret sat at work altering the trimming of her bonnet, out of which she had taken the artificial flowers, she was startled by an exclamation from Mary, who, having finished making strong objections to the measure, had just advanced near the window.

"Mother, there is a carriage stopped down the road, and a lady and a little girl are coming up the walk. It is Mrs. Ainslie and little Miss Gracie;" and without waiting a moment, she ran to the door to admit the coming guests.

Mrs. Ainslie entered with her usual easy and winning manner, and Grace, flying up to Margaret,

hung upon her neck and overwhelmed her with caresses while she whispered, "We have come to take you back with us, Maggie; Louisa and all of us want you so badly; I am sure you will come." Margaret, delighted with the affection manifested by the child, gave herself up to the enjoyment of the moment, forgetful of all past annoyances and cause of grievance, which, although hard to be borne at the time, were nevertheless long since freely forgiven.

But alas! how sudden are the revolutions in human affairs! The party were in the midst of an amicable and pleasant conversation, which no one knew better how to maintain than Mrs. Ainslie, when her eye happened to be caught by the purple flowers lying on the table beside the bonnet from which they had been taken, and a remarkable change was at once observable in her manner.

"My lost flowers! I have found them at last!" she exclaimed, with deep emphasis and rising anger. "How little did I expect to find them here! Margaret, what a hypocrite you have been! pretending to so much goodness while you were so false at heart! Say not a single word—I will not listen—I see it all—I see it all; you have been *the thief* that has so long escaped detection! there is the evi-

dence of it! You shall never enter my house again, neither will I stay another instant in yours!"

So saying, the exasperated lady, taking Grace by the hand, hastily left the dwelling of the wonder-stricken inmates of the cottage before they could utter a word of inquiry or explanation. Margaret, as we have before said, although possessing much force of character, was nevertheless timid and modest, but, accustomed to submit to Mrs. Ainslie for so long, although she tried to utter a few words of explanation, was unable to do so. The blood rushed to her face—her breathing became short and laboured. She was conscious that she had been called a thief and a hypocrite, and the words smote painfully upon her heart, although she had not the most remote idea of the cause that had called forth the hasty and insulting expressions. She turned her eyes inquiringly toward her mother, who, coming near to her, folded her in her arms and bade her be comforted.

"Mother, you don't believe her; it's not true—these never were Mrs. Ainslie's flowers; it's false—I am no thief."

"My own Margaret," said Alice, as she mingled her tears with those her daughter was now plentifully shedding, "be comforted; I know you too

well to suspect you of dishonesty, even for a moment. There is some great misunderstanding somewhere, but all will come right at last, for God can bring light out of darkness and good out of seeming evil. We have often before been sorely afflicted, but can you forget that we have been always brought safely through the deep waters and led to praise him at last? Surely we can trust God now."

"Yes, mother," sobbed Margaret, "but we have never had so great a trial as this. To be accused of theft—our good name taken away—only think what an injury it will be! I do not think I can ever forgive Mrs. Ainslie; and I was so willing to serve her, and I am sure I served her faithfully;" and her tears burst forth afresh.

"Do you not remember what your father said when you were so hurt with Kitty Green, and said you would never forgive her?" inquired Alice. "Was it not that we should forgive even as we hope to be forgiven? and although there were cases in which it was hard to do so, yet we were able to do so through Christ strengthening us?"

Margaret made no answer. The mention of her father called up thoughts of other days, and memory of the many rough paths she had been called to tread; and recalling the many scriptural lessons he

had given her to aid her in passing their winding course in safety, she grew calm as in lingering over the past thankfully she read the lesson of trust for the dark present as well as future which it was so well calculated to teach.

But they could not endure this trial alone, for their alarmed imaginations at once pictured loss of character, and consequently loss of employment, and to this would ensue deeper poverty than they had yet known. They must tell their new trouble to the Browns and Mr. Upton, and in doing so found great comfort. Five or six years of mutual sympathy and friendship, founded on experience of mutual worth—how closely they may knit hearts together, so that even in circumstances like these no suspicion could arise to weaken even for a moment the strength of the bond or sully its lustre! and they received the comfort their words were so well calculated to bestow, and uttered in the assurance of faith that all would come out right.

"The path of life," said Mr. Upton, "is full of interruptions, and there are many dark dispensations which the Christian at the time cannot fathom. In such cases we must rest in the Lord and wait patiently for him. Committing our way to his guidance and trusting in him, he will bring forth right-

cousness as the light and judgment as the noon-day."

Some time passed away, however, before Margaret had recovered sufficiently from the shock to decide exactly what her future course should be. Nothing had been heard from Mrs. Ainslie, and the family began to hope that she had found her flowers and discovered her mistake. But Margaret's trial was not yet over. Finding no change in the manners of those among whom she dwelt, and hearing no whispers, she began to recover confidence and contemplate the duties which life demands of every one, and, as she did so, felt that further procrastination would be wrong. No trial is crushing so long as we feel that ever so slightly our hearts rebound from its pressure, and Margaret was conscious that she had not altogether lost that elasticity of mind which is necessary to enable one to rise and prepare for the calls of duty. "It is only as life goes on and youth and hope are deadened, that we become as calmly acquiescent in sorrow as in joy; and even then some minds have a spring of vigour and a power of happiness which, after years of trial, will enable them to rise, as it were, instantaneously as soon as the least relief is given."

Margaret's mind was not exactly of this cast, but

obedient ever to the claims of duty, she shook off the melancholy that oppressed her and forced herself to think and act. She had seen the newspapers sometimes when she was at Mrs. Ainslie's, and had read from them advertisements of various kinds from servants and others offering and inquiring for situations; and she bethought herself of consulting John Brown's weekly paper, in which, after some search, she found, at the end of a long list of "wants," the wished-for information in the following:

"WANTED—For three little girls, a nursery governess, who will take entire charge of them; one who has been accustomed to children will be preferred, and a liberal salary given."

This seemed exactly the situation she would like, and she only delayed long enough to consult her friends on the subject until she set out to undertake a new servitude. The place named was at the farther end of the town in which Mrs. Ainslie lived; and, after reaching the house, she found it much grander than the one she had lately left. She had no wish to enter into this great mansion, for what she had seen of fashionable life had disgusted her, and had half determined to return when the bright, happy face of a child peeping from a win-

dow altered her intention, and going up the steps she rang the bell. The servant who appeared ushered her into the dining-room, where she waited that sick, anxious wait which poor people are so often obliged to endure. At last the door opened and the lady of the house entered. Margaret rose instinctively, less from deference, however, than impulse, for the sweet and gracious countenance and gentle manner of Mrs. Howard won from her instant admiration and respect. She was, indeed, one of those rare beings whose beautiful nature looked out from every feature and gesture of her face and manner, and, carried away by the unspeakable charm of her words and actions, Margaret felt relieved of all embarrassment as she stated the object of her visit and offered herself for the situation advertised.

"I am very sorry," replied Mrs. Howard, in a tone which made the words convey the certainty of the speaker's sincerity, "to be obliged to tell you that the lady who advertised—a relative who is staying for the present with me—has only yesterday engaged one whom she considers a suitable person. Nay, do not look so disappointed," she continued, as she saw a cloud overshadow Margaret's face; "I hope that securing a situation is

not of so much importance to you as to give real cause for vexation at being a little too late. But I have another friend who wants a nursery-maid, and if you will give me your name and a recommendation from your last employer, who can vouch for your capabilities, I have no doubt but that you will be engaged at once."

Margaret blushed deeply; she told her name, and mentioned Mrs. Ainslie as her last employer, but frankly declared that she could not ask any reference from her, as some unpleasant circumstances prevented her doing so. The necessity of being prepared with this information, so certain to be required and so essential to the obtaining of a situation, had never until this moment occurred to her, and the question created an embarrassment and gave her a confused manner, which Mrs. Howard was not slow to notice.

"I hope you are not hurt," she said, "at my mentioning the necessity of asking a reference; most persons require it, for it is a serious thing to place children in the charge of a stranger, and no mother who is worthy of the name would do so without making inquiries; and this I think is quite as much for the advantage of the employed as for that of the employer."

She felt a humiliating consciousness that what Mrs. Howard required was nothing more than all would require, but at the same time recognized the justice of the demand. Though conscious of her own innocence, she was as powerless to comply with it as if she had been the guilty thing Mrs. Ainslie had blamed her with being. She therefore remained silent, and whilst she did so, Mrs. Howard had an opportunity and time to recal something she had heard respecting Mrs. Ainslie and her "pattern" nursery-maid. Margaret at length looked up, and, reading aright the altered countenance of her hostess, rose quietly from her chair, and with a certain air of dignity and innocence in her manner, said:

"I see that my being unable to refer to Mrs. Ainslie has created an injurious impression, and, as I have never lived with any other person, there is no one else to whom I can refer. I served Mrs. Ainslie long and faithfully, but lately she has accused me of being guilty of a wicked and criminal act, and therefore I cannot apply to her. But she had a good opinion of me once, and it is some consolation to know—as also God knows—that I have never wronged her."

Great is the majesty of truth; there is an earnest

and impressive tone in it, especially when spoken under circumstances of great difficulty, which produces conviction by an inherent candour which all feel without any process of reasoning or argument. The few words spoken were enough, if not entirely to remove suspicion, to soften the kind heart of Mrs. Howard; the temporary cloud passed from her brow, her generous heart whispered pity for one so young, and as Margaret was leaving the room she held out her hand and said:

"I am acquainted with Mrs. Ainslie, and have heard her speak more than once in praise of you as a nursery-maid; and have heard, too, that she believes herself to have been disappointed in you. But in spite of the adverse appearances said to exist against you, I cannot bring myself to believe that you have been guilty of that of which you have been accused. It will, however, be very difficult for you to get such a place as you wish without a reference of some kind."

"When I entered upon Mrs. Ainslie's service," said Margaret, "I had no recommendation but from my pastor, which I can get again."

"But do not be offended at my abrupt allusion to a subject which must be painful to you, or suffer yourself to be too much discouraged," said Mrs.

Howard. "Everybody in N—— does not know Mrs. Ainslie, and, with a recommendation from your pastor, you may find as good a place as that you have lost. To the resolute and simple heart strength is always given, and do not fear that you will be forgotten by Him without whose knowledge not even a sparrow is suffered to fall. And, in the mean time, if you should fail to find a place such as you desire, come to me once more, and if I can help you, I will."

Margaret left the presence of Mrs. Howard disheartened somewhat, but not discouraged. As we have already said, energy was a strong trait in her character, and, cheered by the kind words of the lady she had just left, she recovered confidence in herself, and, assured of her own innocence, she resolved to let the day bear its own burden, and in the exercise of her steady faith, leave the future to the providence of God. The claims of her family were as imperative as ever, and, steeling herself against a shrinking from duty which, on account of Mrs. Ainslie's behaviour, she now felt, she resolved to go forward strong in the faith of heavenly protection, and face life even in its sternest aspect, and meet submissively whatever trials might still be in store for her.

CHAPTER XIX.

A ROUGH PATH AND A NEW TRIAL.

IN pursuance of this resolution she still consulted the newspaper, and, finding several notices of places such as seemed to suit her, she once more set out to seek a home with strangers. She met with no success, however. One would not take her without a recommendation from her last employer; another, who seemed pleasantly willing to receive her into her family until she heard Mrs. Ainslie's name mentioned, with an altered countenance said she could not decide at once, but requested her to call next day; and a third, of coarser nature, roundly asked her if she was "the girl who had been Mrs. Ainslie's pattern nursery-maid?" and hearing that she had served that lady in the capacity mentioned, she was abruptly informed that her services would not be required. What was poor Margaret to do now? As she thought over the painful circumstances of her present condition, it struck her that in applying to Mrs. Preston she

might be able to know exactly the amount of wrong she was accused of having done, for, from the unconnected words of Mrs. Ainslie, of "flowers, theft and hypocrite," she had been unable to understand the full meaning. It will be remembered that while still in Mrs. Ainslie's service she had been told to put the purple flowers into a box where there were already some others, and which was kept on a high shelf in the nursery closet. They were not missed until some time after she left, and therefore, as she knew nothing of their loss, was utterly unable to comprehend what Mrs. Ainslie's rash and unexpected accusation meant. A few words of explanation would have removed the wrong impression, and saved days and weeks of sorrow to one of the parties and of repentance and regret to the other.

The day, which had been ushered in by a bright autumnal sun, was drawing to a close as Margaret pursued her way homeward, and dark clouds, gathering in the sky and shrouding the landscape in a solemn veil, anticipated the coming night. Margaret, however, did not notice the change in the appearance of the heavens; she had passed through a severe trial on that day, and felt herself much prostrated both in mind and body. Unwilling to meet

her mother whilst such a weight rested on her heart, lest she should not be able to control her emotions, and thus add to the distress of the family, she sat down on the trunk of the same fallen tree which had so often afforded her a resting-place on her many journeys to and from N——.

Everything was still, sad and gloomy; no sounds of life broke upon the mournful silence that reigned around; the notes of some late birds, wheeling home to their nests, alone disturbed the quietness of the evening hour. All was calculated to deepen her sadness, and, yielding to the tide of her long pent-up emotions, she gave way to a violent fit of weeping. She asked herself what course was best to pursue in this sore trial; wondered if Mrs. Ainslie had indeed spread the injurious report that by taking away her good name was to shut her out from finding employment; and how were they all to live if they could get no work? Her excited fancy painted the case in the strongest colours, and a sense of misery, such as she had never before experienced, overpowered her. A vague, indescribable dread of something being about to happen oppressed and filled her heart with anguish such as few are called to experience.

But Margaret's anguish, though great, was but

momentary, for God, whom she served, was near to comfort her. Times of trouble are times of honesty, and when trial comes to the lover of the world it is to the world that he will turn for relief; but the lover of God seeks consolation from the only one sure source, which alone is found in Him to whom the prayer of the upright is a delight. It is then, when the heart most feels its weakness and dependence, that it yearns most sensibly after that in which it trusts; and never does it feel its weakness and dependence more than in the days of its tribulation; it is then that the believer throws himself upon God with the spirit of a sorrowing, affectionate and trustful child, and finds that the hour of sorrow is the hour in which he is blessed with special intercourse with his Maker, and he finds a comfort in affliction, for he is assured that "afflictions work together for good" to those who love God. It is then, when the infirmity of his nature will force him to seek a support mightier than his own, and with deepest submission he owns himself helpless without God's help, the weight of the burden will adjust itself precisely to the need, "and as it increases so will the spirit within be called forth to endure," until at last is learned the realization of the truth of that cheering promise which never can

be broken—"As thy days so shall thy strength be."

Comfort came, however, as she recalled the promises in which her pious father had taught her to trust; and, although she still continued to weep, her tears were not so bitter as at first, and the tide of grief gradually lessened: "Call upon me in the day of trouble and I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me;" "Cast thy burden on the Lord and he shall sustain thee;" "Trust ye in the Lord for ever, for in him is everlasting strength;" and the response made by her heart was in the words of Job, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him, and will not fear what man can do." As she thus communed with herself, she found a soothing which religion alone can impart. She felt as though an unseen Arm was buoying her up amid the billows of tribulation. There seemed to be another fountain opened within her heart—a fountain of peace and quietness—which, mingling with the tide of her grief, formed a sweet concord of thoughts and feelings and affections blending themselves with the decrees and allotments of God, and mitigated the severity of her distress.

As she poured out the anguish of her soul to Him who "executes judgment for the oppressed,"

her mind regained comparative serenity. A softening balm was infused into the wounds of her spirit, and although ready to acknowledge that she could claim nothing from God upon the footing of desert, yet she could trust him that he would "hide her in the secret of his tabernacle from the pride of man," and keep her safely "under his pavilion from the strife of tongues," and place her upon a rock against which the tempest may violently beat, but which it cannot shake. Truly "the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, the everlasting arms are beneath him, they are the shield of his help, and through them he shall come forth of all his enemies."

Do our readers wonder why such a severe trial as this we have just described was allotted to one so anxious to pursue a consistent Christian course as was Margaret Gordon? God has reared up no bulwark impregnable to misfortune in order to separate the pious and virtuous from the rest of mankind and to screen them from the common disasters of life. No; they are called to have troubles just as others have; but God, who has allowed the trouble, has with it opened sources of consolation which the worldling can never know. The defence which religion provides is altogether

of an internal kind, for it is the heart which it professes to guard. It endows them with a strength of mind which enables them to endure the pressure of adversity with calmness and submission to the will of Him who "doeth all things well," affords that peace and security which arises from the belief in divine protection, and does truly bring them "into the secret of his tabernacle" by opening sources of consolation which are hidden from others.

Thus soothed, Margaret had time to think over the late unexpected and painful occurrence which had caused so much sorrow to herself and her friends. Evil tongues had been at work; the ladies she had called upon had all been listening to slanderous reports—always more readily listened to than just onés. Of this she was assured; but who was the slanderer? Could it be Mrs. Ainslie that was thus wilfully endeavouring to injure one who was not only innocent, but who had served her so faithfully as to call forth praises?—praises made so publicly in the circle of her acquaintances that now, in the present changed state of affairs, they proved an actual injury. This, however, was not exactly the case. Mrs. Ainslie had, indeed, acted hastily and wrongly in not waiting to hear

what Margaret had to say about the flowers, which so nearly resembled her own. But she had said nothing which she had not some reason to believe true. The flowers were gone, and as she remarked these so similar until compared with those she had lost, and remembered the depredations which had been committed while Margaret was with her, she might be excused if for a moment she doubted; but, judging too hastily and under the influence of anger at having been so long the dupe, as she believed, of one she so implicitly trusted, she had forgotten, if indeed she had ever learned, the Christian rule, "not to speak evil of one another," and condemned instead of listening to any explanation. But who has not at times sinned in like manner?

There is but one safe line for all—the line drawn by the Bible. The evil talk which we hear ought not to be repeated, but should be kept buried in our own bosoms, unless drawn forth by an undoubted call of duty. If we venture to overstep this mark, we break a direct command, and cannot be guiltless of the consequences of our careless words.

Mrs. Ainslie had, however, no idea of the extent of the injury she was doing when she mentioned Margaret's supposed dereliction to two or three intimate friends, who laughingly told their two or

three intimate friends how they "pitied poor Mrs. Ainslie, who for once had confessed herself completely deceived—she who had always prided herself on her penetration." She was thoughtless enough, too, to mention it in the presence of her nursery-girl, who repeated it in the kitchen, from whence, much exaggerated, it was carried abroad in a hundred channels. She would have been grieved had she known the great sorrow her rash accusation and subsequent assertions had brought to the Gordons; for her temper was naturally good, and she was well disposed toward the poor, and gave liberally to them when she was asked, for she was too indolent to seek them out; but regarding them, together with her servants, as an inferior race, she never thought or cared whether they had feelings to wound or were susceptible of injury. Life had flowed on smoothly with her; from childhood every wish had been gratified, and in the miserable and long-indulged habits of selfishness which had become part of her nature, she forgot that there were duties which the rich are bound to render to the poor, equally as the poor are required to serve the rich. If she had made an open accusation, it would have been better than these whispers, which increased in magnitude the farther they went, for then

contradictory facts might have been brought forward to disprove it; as it was, there was nothing tangible, for who can take hold of "they say," which is mostly the only evidence in such cases?

Absorbed by her busy thoughts, Margaret did not observe how the daylight had faded, and that twilight shades were gathering over the fields and woods, whose heavy trunks and half-leafless branches were becoming one dark, indistinct mass, over which dark clouds, foreboding rain, rested, until a damp, heavy mist coming up through the valley sent a chill through her frame, warned her of the unhealthfulness of her position and forbade further delay. Removing as far as possible all traces of her late violent emotion, she walked quickly toward home, which she reached just in time to quiet the uneasiness her mother was beginning to feel at her protracted absence. She recounted, in answer to their many questions, the disappointments she had experienced, carefully concealing the portion that had caused her such deep distress, lest it should trouble them, and spoke cheerfully of the future:

"Something, dear mother, will be provided; God will care for us now, even as he did on that stormy day at N——, when he sent Mr. Berkley

to us with good tidings. I can never forget that providence. But I am very, very tired; let us have prayers, dear mother, and let me go to bed; this has been a wearisome day."

Prayers being over, she left the rest to remain up and went to bed, to think over plans for the future and how to regulate the present. But not long did she remain awake. Worn-out by the painful occurrences of the day, and exhausted by the force of the severe emotions they had called forth, tired Nature demanded rest. No human being can endure a great strain of mental anguish long. The dull murmur of the voices of those who were still conversing in the outer room ceased to be heard; a drowsy weakness stole over her, and she soon forgot all her troubles in the land of dreams. Sleep came; Sleep, the sweet restorer of exhausted Nature, and the blessing of the woeworn and weary, wrapped her in his kind oblivion; and great is the love and mercy of Him who, in the midst of sorrow, "gives to his beloved sleep."

CHAPTER XX.

THE LOST FLOWERS FOUND, AND A STRANGE DISCOVERY.

THE Sabbath morning lay in the perfection of its autumnal splendour over the pastoral landscape, and the inmates of almost every farm-house and cottage were preparing to go up to the house of God. Margaret arose from a sound but not refreshing sleep, and, with the rest of the family, made the usual arrangements for attending public worship. There are few who have not at some time or other experienced the same feelings as did our poor servant-girl when she awoke, with the at first dim consciousness of some painful weight resting upon them, but which gradually increases in force as the truth is recollected and the trouble assumes a more definite form. But in addition to this mental disturbance was a languor and physical prostration which pressed heavily upon her, and rendered her entirely unfit for any exertion.

Her mother noticed her looking very ill, and recommended rest and quiet at home, and she gladly complied, for she felt that to be alone on this, the blessed Sabbath, would bring her into closer communion with God, who alone knew the weight that was pressing upon her heart. A holy calm seemed to rest on everything around, and, taking her well-worn Bible, she sat down by the window with the shadow of the half-unleaved branches of the old pear tree chequering the page, and felt soothed and comforted. That Book had been her support in all her trials—the death of her father, the prospect of deeper poverty than the family had yet known, and the perplexities of her life whilst in Mrs. Ainslie's service. Unconsciously she turned to those chapters in which comfort is promised to the afflicted, and now every verse seemed to overflow with more and newer meanings, and to "breathe a blessing farther and farther" into her troubled soul, so that she was at length able to banish all disturbing earthly emotions, and keep the Sabbath sanctified without intrusion to the great purpose for which it was designed.

The blessed Sabbath! how sacred is its calm! how holy and soothing is its repose to those who

set it apart to God! It is a day when Nature seems to rest from her labour, even as God did when the work of creation was completed—a day when the poor man may remit his toil and the rich man forget his anxieties; all who will may find it a season of rest and refreshment, from which the Christian traveller goes on his way rejoicing, for within its hallowed space he has found communion with God his Saviour. But none can estimate the blessing granted by Eternal Wisdom in the institution of the Sabbath like those who are worn-out by labour, poverty, or other ills, for the turmoil of earth is then for a time suspended. 'Tis then that the iron band of the six days' chain is broken, and the pious poor man renews his hold on heaven. The clamours, cares, anxieties and struggles of life are forgotten in the calm it brings, even as the sound of the waves that have beat against the vessel's side is no more remembered by the crew who have "moored her securely within the circle of some landlocked bay, beautiful in its perpetual calm."

Monday came, and with it came the call for renewed labour. Margaret felt it her duty to aid in the family tasks, and tried to forget and overcome the languor and depression which hung around

her. Her head would become giddy and a strange sensation of faintness would come over her at times, which she resolutely tried to overcome by keeping herself busily employed. But nature would not be baffled. After a few days passed in this way she was seized with a violent chill, succeeded by a high fever, and was carried insensible to her bed by her alarmed mother.

The family at first thought her illness would, like her former indisposition, prove temporary, but she gradually grew worse. Imperative nature at last obliged her to yield, and she lay in a low fever, of which the symptoms became daily more alarming, and made medical skill necessary.

John Brown went for Dr. Harrison, who came at once. He looked very grave as he examined her pulse, and after asking if anything unusual had occurred to cause such a violent attack, which he said had principally fallen upon her nerves, pronounced her to be in imminent danger.

"She may have contracted this fever by staying out so late on that damp evening you speak of," he added; "but there has been something more to cause this strange disturbance, and we have everything to fear from the incipient symptoms of brain fever which are present. However, we will hope

for the best;" and, after admonishing them of the necessity of entire rest and quiet, kindly assured the anxious mother that he would do everything in his power to restore her.

At the beginning of Margaret's illness, Alice had behaved with the calmness and composure accordant with her character; but now when, in her confused and wandering mind, she recalled the painful past, and in her partial delirium would murmur forth "The flowers! the flowers! everybody will believe it! mother, it is not true!" those muttered exclamations filled her maternal heart with intense anguish, and her grave and resigned demeanour changed into an expression of hopelessness and sadness which it was painful to witness. But there was no word of murmur or impatience uttered; her heart foreboded the worst—Margaret would die, and how could she submit to such a sore dispensation? It was once more to be tested whether, with all her quiet humility and often sorely-tried faith, she could willingly acknowledge the supremacy of God and bow in silence to this severe decree. But although all was so dark, and her troubles at times seemed too heavy to be borne, she did not murmur, but prayed that strength according to the day might be bestowed, for she knew

that even in the deepest wounds that any one can suffer there is a divine Hand that can pour upon them a healing balm—a balm that flows in and is derived from the fountain of heaven.

The medicines given by Dr. Harrison soon removed the worst symptoms. The delirium subsided, and she fell into a state of lethargy scarcely less alarming to her mother and Aunt Hannah, who aided Alice constantly in nursing her, for so profound was the stupor that to them it had the appearance of death. It was, however, salutary—the result of reaction from excessive fatigue of both mind and body; every nerve had been overstrained, and nature demanded that the whole system should sleep for a while.

Gradually, however, and at intervals, her thoughts would wander back wearily to earth, and she would talk, as if in a dream, of those things which had so disturbed her; then, again, all would be dark and stagnant as before, framing no thought nor taking notice of anything that was passing. And so the days came and went, but, although time passed heavily to the inmates of the cottage, it brought the usual change of seasons in its flight.

Autumn was exchanging his garb of many tints for one of russet hue; fierce winds from the hills

swept over the late verdant fields and plains, and left the woods bare; cold, gray skies warned the feathered choristers that it was time to seek a warmer home, and moaning blasts took the place of the sweet harmonies that had lately mingled in the leafy coverts. Many storms had come and gone during the advance of the season, but its close was marked by one of more than common severity. The thunder rattled over the roof of the cottage, flashes of lightning gleamed across the darkened room, and the fierce howling wind came in gusts, levelling fences and uprooting trees, but Margaret still remained wholly insensible to the strife. The kind watchers by her bedside, fearing that she would be alarmed, now and then ventured, in their anxiety, to whisper words of inquiry, to which she returned no answer, for, although not wholly insensible now, she had no power to reply. She had taken no notice of the lapse of time, or the change from morning to noon or from noon to evening; she could understand what the speakers said, but, oppressed with unspeakable languor, was able to frame but few thoughts and to perform no action. That storm was long remembered for its violence, but He at "whose command the winds blow and lift up the waves of the sea, and who stilleth the

rage thereof," sent it forth as a messenger of his providence to bring comfort to the hopeless and bestow peace on the afflicted.

At the same time that Margaret had left Mrs. Ainslie's service, Mrs. Preston had gone on a long visit to a relative in the West, from which she only returned a day or two before the storm: she therefore knew nothing of the painful occurrences we have just related; perhaps if she had not been absent they would not have taken place, or, at least, their harsher features might have been softened. Her judicious counsels would have moderated Mrs. Ainslie's haste, and prevented poor Margaret from being condemned without proper investigation. Her house had been shut up and her servants dismissed while she was absent, and she was now staying a few days with her niece, whilst arrangements were being made for her to return to her own home.

On the evening of the storm, the two ladies were sitting together in the parlour, conversing so earnestly that they did not notice the increasing gloom, which, spreading over the sky and darkening every object, heralded the approaching tempest. The subject was the trouble with servants, always a prolific one. Mrs. Ainslie complained of the

great trouble she had had lately; she had been obliged to change so often, and now she would have to dismiss Susan, the nursery-girl, who was cross and impatient, always quarrelling with the children; Grace and Philip had grown quite rude, and Louisa was all the time fretting after Margaret, and urging her mother to send for her to return.

"And will she not come back?" asked Mrs. Preston; "I am sure you will not find any one to serve you better, and why not gratify Louisa, whose health is, as I see, by no means improved? Do you know where she is?"

"No," was the reply, "I do not; but I do not want her back; she is a deceiver and a hypocrite. Why, do you know, Aunt Fanny, that all the time she was so sanctimonious, reading the Bible to the children and pretending to be so good, she was the thief who stole the things we missed, and was so cunning that we never once thought of suspecting her?"

"But are you sure you are right? Have you sufficient proof that Margaret purloined the missing articles? One should be very careful about making such an assertion, for the being wrongfully accused of an act like this may be productive of

the greatest injury. I hope, Clara, you have not mentioned your suspicions to any one?"

Mrs. Ainslie did not answer the last question, but went on to state what had occurred on the day she was at Mrs. Gordon's cottage, adding—

"I went there intending to bring her home with me, but when I saw the flowers she had taken out of her bonnet—the hypocrite who would not wear flowers—lying there, I taxed her roundly with the theft and left at once."

"But did you ask no explanation, Clara?" asked Mrs. Preston. "Every one has a right to be heard and to speak in her own behalf. Besides, artificial flowers are so much alike. You will often find those made of the most common material so closely resembling the French—for they are often made from the same pattern—that they might readily be taken for them; the only difference is in the materials used in the making. Did you examine the flowers before you made the charge?"

"No, I did not; I was too much amazed," said Mrs. Ainslie. "But her great embarrassment showed that she was guilty, for neither she nor any one of the family attempted to utter a word."

"Perhaps, Clara, you did not give them time," said Mrs. Preston. "I can well imagine the para-

lyzing effect of such a scene as you describe." And then, in a grave tone, she added: "The poor are often suspected of pilfering because the indigent sometimes steal, and suspicions are often freely expressed against them to their lasting injury. And when, through some slanderous or false report, their reputations are permanently ruined, it is regarded of no consequence that their good name is for ever lost, because they are poor and considered of no account in the community. The rich man may steal by wholesale or defraud by thousands, and still, through reputation of his wealth, assume a high place in society. But, Clara, God cares for the little ones of his flock. He will 'lay judgment to the line and righteousness to the plummet;' and with this assurance, when we contemplate the unequal ways of man, we are cheered that all will be made right hereafter, for that which we know not now shall yet be made plain. The poor man, whose heart has often been wounded by uncharitable suspicion, will receive justice; *God will plead his cause.* He who has oppressed the poor and made widows and orphans weep, will receive his reward; *God will judge him.* Oh, Clara, how careful should we be not to offend or injure one of God's little ones! We must, in all our intercourse with our

fellow-creatures, remember that the poor have sensibilities as well as the rich, and the servant may have more tender feelings than the mistress. An uncharitable suspicion or abusive act may wound as deeply the tenant of a hovel as the possessor of a palace; there is but this difference—the former must endure, while the latter can defend himself."

What Mrs. Ainslie would have answered we cannot tell, for the storm had now come on in all its force and was raging violently. A loud crash, as if glass was broken, and a cry from the nursery, were heard. The conversation was abruptly ended, and both of the speakers ran hastily up stairs to see what was the matter. They found all in the greatest confusion; the terrified children were screaming, and the nurse-maid, scarcely less frightened, instead of endeavouring to soothe them, was scolding and bidding them to "hush up with their crying; they made her so nervous she did not know what she was doing." How different from our poor Margaret, who would have quieted them by telling of Him who "hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand," and says to the winds and the waves "Peace, be still," and they obey him!

The crash which caused the great alarm was

found to proeeed from the falling of the large sycamore tree which overhung the nursery windows. It was old—had been planted by Mr. Ainslie's father. When a boy he had played in its shade and gathered its button-like balls. It was a favourite with all of the family, who prized it for its age and leafy sereen which curtained the windows on that side of the dwelling and sheltered them from the fierce heats of summer. But it had now yielded to the autumn blast, and in falling had struck the window and shattered the glass, thus frightening the children and causing the outery which had alarmed not only Mrs. Ainslie, but the usually calm Mrs. Preston.

Reassured by the presenee of their mother and aunt, quiet was soon restored in the nursery; the storm passed over, and at a scarcely later hour than usual the lately disturbed family forgot their reeent alarm in sound and tranquilizing sleep.

The morning after the storm rose bright, clear and comparatively calm; nevertheless the aspeet of nature was not a cheerful one, for deep shadows from flying clouds were still passing over the face of the autumnal sky and everything looked mournfully dreary, for the ravages of the storm were

THE DISCOVERY.

Page 413.

great. The garden was laid waste, the late flowers were beaten down to the ground, branches of trees were strewn over the lawn; there was everywhere desolation, which the sun, as it rose higher in the eastern sky, rendered more evident by the contrast of his external brightness, and bringing to the heart a burdensome sense of chill and sadness.

There was no possibility of restoring the old sycamore to its former upright position. Mr. Ainslie had therefore given orders that it should be cut up into firewood and removed, and the grounds cleared as speedily as possible from the other wrecks left by the storm. The most of the family, mourning the loss of the favourite old tree, were out watching the process of cutting, when a loud exclamation from one of the men employed, as he placed his hand on a large branch he had just severed from the trunk, awoke a closer attention from all.

"See what I have found here in this hollow branch!" he called out, as he exhibited a handful of shining articles he had drawn out from this obscure and unsuspected receptacle—"rings, thimbles, spoons and what not?" All pressed forward and recognized the articles missed during the spring and summer, the loss of which had at first caused much trouble and anxiety in the household, and latterly

added largely to the suspicion with which Mrs. Ainslie regarded Margaret.

The articles were at once carried to her. She examined them—not one was missing. The beautiful amethyst breastpin, the disappearance of which had caused Norah to leave, was restored unharmed.

But who was the thief? Who had taken the pains to hide the articles in the hollow of the tree?

"I think," said one of the men, "your pet crow has been the thief. Crows will steal like everything; everybody knows that. Just look at him there, chattering as if he was angry at having his nest broken up and his stolen goods taken away!"

And so it was; the large branches of the sycamore hung closely over the nursery windows. "Black Peter" could, during the summer, when they were constantly open, go in and out as he pleased; and as when the boys were at home he had the range of the whole house, he had taken advantage of his liberty and carried off whatever he could find, hiding all in his nest in the hollow of the tree. And now he sat on the branch of a tree at a little distance, smoothing his ruffled plumes and chattering his displeasure, making other noisy demon-

strations, greatly to the amusement of the watching children and servants.

"You see now, Clara," said Mrs. Preston, "how wrong it is to make hasty conclusions and assert suspicions as facts, making random assertions which, as in this case, are well calculated to wound the feelings or reputation of any one. You say you taxed Margaret Gordon with being dishonest; you now see that she was innocent as far as the loss of these articles is concerned."

"But the flowers, Aunt Fanny, the flowers—I saw them myself; there can be no mistake there," replied Mrs. Ainslie, as she rose hastily and left the room, having no wish to hear any more on the subject, for she was beginning to feel that she had done wrong, but had as yet no idea of acknowledging her error.

The garden, as we have said, was a perfect wreck. Some late flowers that she prized had been left out, and she went herself to see how they had fared and to what extent they were damaged. The gardener had been at work from an early hour; the flowers, about which she was solicitous, disordered by the rush of the tempest, were restored to nearly their former appearance, and much of the usual trim neatness of the flower-beds and walks was already

regained. Mrs. Ainslie had advanced some distance into the garden before she saw any one but a lad, who was busy wheeling away the rubbish. She was about to inquire where Burton the gardener was, when she saw him approaching from a clump of shrubbery which stood in one corner of the garden.

"See here, madam, what I have found tied on the little bushes up there—the bushes you told me you wanted set out this fall. I just thought it would be a good time after this big rain, and only see what I have found."

As he spoke he handed her a number of artificial flowers, faded by the weather and still wet from the rain, but not so totally defaced but that she recognized them at once.

Mrs. Ainslie was not an evil-intentioned person, and a pang of deep regret shot through her heart as she thought of having charged the loss upon the guiltless—one, too, who had served her so faithfully and merited such different treatment. Taking the flowers from the gardener, she went with them in her hand straight to the room where she had left Mrs. Preston, and found her still there.

"Aunt Fanny, this is a day of wonders," she exclaimed, as she held up the limp and faded

flowers; "we have first found my long-missing jewels, and now here are the lost flowers come most strangely to light;" and she then proceeded to tell where and how the gardener had found them. "And now," she added, "how do you think they got there? The crow, indeed, carried off the other things. How strange it is that we never thought of his hiding them away, when he was so much through the house, and every one knows that those birds will pilfer and hide away in their nests! But the flowers were taken from a box in the nursery and tied on the bushes. Who could have done it?"

Mrs. Preston was about to say, "Perhaps it was the children," but before she could venture to brave the displeasure the remark would be sure to call forth, little Philip, who had followed his mother into the room, cried out,

"Mamma, I know who did it; it was Gracie and Cousin Mary. They climbed up to the cupboard and got them, and we had a party in the garden, and then they gave me lots of candy, and said I must not tell that they took the flowers."

Mrs. Ainslie looked as if she would like to doubt Philip's word, but Mrs. Preston advised that Grace should be summoned and answer for herself.

"This is no trifling matter," she said. "Margaret Gordon is poor, a servant 'living out' for hire; her character, her best possession, is at stake in this matter, and it is a serious thing to bring a false accusation. Remember that the Scripture tells us that the man that 'beareth false witness against his neighbour is as a sword and a sharp arrow,' and a false witness shall not be unpunished; and 'he that speaketh falsely against the helpless shall not escape.' "

Mrs. Ainslie did not answer; her conscience reproached her slightly, for had she not told Mrs. Brooks, and one or two other particular friends who told it to others, so that it had been whispered about and exulted over how Mrs. Ainslie had been deceived in her "pattern nurse?"

The remarks of her pious aunt, however, struck her conscience somewhat, but she endeavoured to check the slight twinge by saying to Grace, as she entered the room with Philip,

"Gracie, darling, you surely did not do such a naughty thing as to steal mamma's flowers and tie them on the bushes? I am sure my Gracie would not do such a naughty thing."

"No, mamma, I did not, I did not; Philip is fibbing."

"Mamma," said Philip, "I ain't fibbing. I saw Gracie and Cousin Mary when they took the flowers, and they gave me lots of candy not to tell."

"Clara, my dear Clara," said Mrs. Preston, most earnestly, "there are moments in our lives which, although but moments, are full of important meanings, and in their fleeting space often determine for good or evil, which shall predominate; and thus have a lasting effect upon the character. This is one of those important periods. Do not let it pass unused for good, lest the neglect should tend to evil. Find out the truth from Grace, who is but a child, and acted perhaps more through thoughtlessness than a desire to do wrong. It may be to her a lesson for good which will prove a lasting benefit through life and save her from much future sorrow."

Grace, on being closely questioned and finding falsehood useless, confessed that she had taken the flowers, but intended to put them back into the box, but forgot it; "for you know, mamma, we went out the next day to Mrs. Raby's and stayed more than a week, so I never thought of the flowers."

"But why did you take the flowers at all, Gra-

cie?" asked Mrs. Ainslie. "Did you not know it was wrong?"

"You know, mamma," answered the child, "you said that when Cousin Mary and the Rabys came we might have a party, and that we might have it in the garden. I wanted to have my party like yours, and all the children talked so much about flowers, and said nobody had parties without having flowers; so I took them out of the box just to have 'make-believes,' like you had, and tied them on the bushes. But I did not know it would rain so, and, indeed, I forgot them; but Philip had no business to tell."

Mrs. Ainslie remained silent; she saw that the child had only acted on the example she had herself set before her, and her conscience told her that the error was her own. She had had much religious instruction from her pious aunt, but in her prosperous life, the stream of which had flowed without interruption, the world had been very delightful, and there seemed but little necessity to seek for anything beyond. She had, however, been the child of many prayers; and when are the prayers of the righteous altogether unavailing? The soul of religion was sleeping, but it was not dead. The germ had not perished; it was to bud and

bring forth fruit, but in God's own good time and way; for he,

> "Severe in mercy, chastening in his love,
> Ofttimes, by dark and solemn visitations,
> Doth interpose and bring the wanderer back
> To the straight path."

"What an active mind that child has!" said Mrs. Ainslie, after Grace was sent off to the nursery, where she was to remain all day by way of punishment. "Who would have ever thought of her trying to imitate my party, by tying flowers on the bushes in the garden?"

"I do not wish to be unnecessarily strict," said Mrs. Preston; "children are imitative beings, and will follow example whether for good or ill; and, although in this case she only did what she saw you do, and the fault is quite as much yours as hers, I think, Clara, you should take advantage of this occasion particularly for inculcating truth and sincerity. God has given you an important task in the charge of these children, whom you are required to bring up for him. On your training, on your example to them, depend consequences of most weighty nature; how careful you should be how or what you impress on the yet unsullied tablet of your child's mind! You see how readily

Grace received the lesson conveyed in the 'make-believes;' how that deception, trifling in itself, led to the greater one of taking the flowers without your permission; how little Philip was bribed with candy not to tell; how the loss of the flowers brought pain to the heart and suspicion on the character of one in humble life, which perhaps may, by inflicting lasting injury on her reputation, be the means of preventing her from making an honest living, on which, unlike you who have every luxury, she must depend for daily bread; and, lastly, that in the fear of your displeasure, the child, conscious that she did wrong in the whole affair, told a deliberate falsehood."

"Aunt Fanny," said Mrs. Ainslie, "I think you make too much of the matter; it is nothing but the loss of a few flowers. What harm can that do?"

"The making or taking of the flowers is nothing, but the principle involved everything — the *possible* injury which might be done to one who to you was a faithful friend rather than a servant, and the *certain* harm which any other than a straightforward course would be sure to do to your child. There is, Clara, in childhood, 'a holy ignorance, a beautiful credulity, a peculiar sanctity,' that one

cannot contemplate without something of a reverential feeling. The impress of the divine nature is, as it were, fresh on the infant spirit—fresh and unsullied by contact with this withering world. One of high authority has said that 'Heaven lies about us in our infancy;' and another, infinitely greater, has assured us that 'of such is the kingdom of heaven.' Should we not therefore tremble, lest an impure breath should dim the clearness of the bright mirror of the childish mind, or lest, by wrong example, we may mislead him from the path of truth? The truth, Clara, is not merely a literal representation, it is that which does not deceive; and in early childhood it is much more easy to teach a child not to deceive than to tell the truth; therefore we must be particularly careful to *act* the truth before a child, as well as to train him to tell, on all occasions, not only the literal truth, but also *teach* him *how* to do it."

We might, perhaps, weary our readers, if we were farther to relate the conversation between Mrs. Preston and her niece, which was continued to some extent. We therefore return to our story. Mrs. Ainslie, ignorant of all that had passed in the interval since she had charged her innocent servant-girl with the abduction of the flowers and the other

missing articles, at last consented, at her aunt's urgent request, to ride out to the cottage and explain her mistake. She was, as we have before told our readers, far from being a person who would willingly injure another; and although unbounded prosperity, and the selfishness always consequent upon it, prevented her from entering into the feelings or appreciating the trials of those who, in the social scale, were lower than herself, she did feel great regret at having charged the loss upon the guiltless, and, what made it worse, on one who had only so lately served her so faithfully.

"I will go this very afternoon, Aunt Fanny," said she, "and explain the mistake; but I dare say Margaret has forgotten the whole affair long ago and has found another place, although I did not give her a character."

Great as had been the sorrow and serious the injury produced by the inconsiderate hastiness of Mrs. Ainslie, the Gordons were of too truly a Christian spirit to think of calling for retribution on her head. Yet it did come to a certain extent, for our errors seldom pass, even in this life, without a pang of punishment and remorse. Ordering her carriage, she rode out to the cottage in the afternoon of the day on which the missing articles were found.

Mary, who was at work in the garden, saw and recognized her as she passed through the gate that led from the road; greatly alarmed, and apprehending some new trouble, she rushed thoughtlessly into the presence of her mother, exclaiming:

"Oh, mother, there is Mrs. Ainslie! what shall we do if she has come on such an errand as the last?"

"Trust in God, Mary; that is all we can do," she replied, as she clasped her hands over her heart, and, like One who had once a heavier burden to bear, that heart poured forth a speechless supplication—"Father, let this cup pass!"

When Mrs. Ainslie entered the house, she found Alice sitting by the fireside, with Mrs. Upton and Aunt Hannah bearing her company. Margaret had passed a restless night, and was now sleeping, if the dreamy stupour caused by exhaustion can be called sleep. We have told our readers of the interest Margaret, after her first reluctance was conquered, had taken in her class of coloured girls in the Sunday-school at E. Church, and how faithfully and prayerfully she had tried to perform her duty as a teacher. Her efforts had been blessed. Two of them had professed themselves Christians and maintained a consistent walk; and one, per-

haps the wildest and least promising of the class, who had died of a lingering illness shortly before, departed in great peace. Through a friend she had sent a message, thanking Margaret for the instruction she had given her, and declaring that it was to her efforts and faithful teaching that she had been awakened to a knowledge of the truth as it is in Christ Jesus, and the enjoyment of that peace which is its consequence, making the believer to rejoice in the prospect of deliverance from "this body of sin and death;" of being made like unto Jesus, and removing all fear of death and all terror of eternity, which to the natural heart are so fearful.

Joy that comes unlooked for is thrice welcome, and this message coming at this time fell like healing balm upon her soul, and brought the sweetest soothing. But the excitement caused by the transition from the despondence which had taken such deep hold upon her to the hope, nay the assurance it gave that her life had not been unacceptable to God, proved too much for the weakened body and distanced sleep. But at length it came, and a kind of insensibility stole over her, and, incapable of exertion, she was lying in a half-dreaming state when Mrs. Ainslie entered. The embarrassment that lady naturally felt was much lessened by the pres-

ence of Mrs. Upton, whom she had met on several occasions, and the slight acquaintance was of great use on the present occasion. The conversation for a few minutes was nevertheless somewhat constrained, although it related only to indifferent subjects; but it was soon broken by the unwelcome visitor.

"Oh, by the by, Mrs. Gordon, those flowers!" said Mrs. Ainslie, in a manner which, always gentle, she meant to be more insinuating than usual. "How sorry I am for what happened about those unlucky flowers and that foolish jewelry! Where do you think they were found, after all?" and then proceeded to relate what is already known to the reader. "Who," she continued, "would ever have imagined that Gracie would have remembered anything about tying the flowers on the bushes, or that crows were such thieves? But Mr. Ainslie says he wonders that we did not suspect the crow, for that all of the raven tribe are great thieves and very fond of glittering objects. And now, where is Margaret? Is she at home, or has she taken a new service? I should like to see her, for I have come to say that I am very sorry for my inconsiderate haste, and hope that she has forgotten it and that now all will be over."

Alice Gordon rose from her seat with the quiet dignity that usually characterized her.

"Margaret has not taken a new service, Mrs. Ainslie," said she, "and you can see her;" and taking the hand of the unresisting visitor, now beginning to be bewildered as she noticed the serious faces of those around her—those who regarded her more in sorrow than in anger—led her into the adjoining room, where Margaret lay, pale and only half conscious. Her breathing alone told that life was present. Was death to be expected? Was it near?

"How long has she been ill?" she at last ventured to ask, and was astonished to hear that it was of several weeks' duration—almost ever since the time when she had been here last.

"She tried to find a new place," added Aunt Hannah, as she found that Alice could say no more; "but as she had no recommendation from you, and it seems that suspicions of her honesty had got abroad, she could not obtain a situation, and, fearing that her reputation was injured for ever, she lost heart altogether and has been ill ever since. God only knows how this sad affair is to end."

Mrs. Ainslie, although she had been devoted to the service of the world, was by nature kind and

feeling. Selfishness, the fruit of long prosperity and indulgence of every good that wealth can procure, had encrusted but not entirely obliterated the finer principles of her nature; and now a sense of the consequences of her own wrong-doing flashed painfully over her soul, and uttering the only words she was able to speak—"Forgive me, forgive me! I did not intend it!"—she pressed the hand of Mrs. Gordon, and hastily departed from the house.

And now, dear reader, among the many wise counsels given by one whose words were those of inspiration, there is none which deserves greater regard than that which bids, "Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life." Its importance, however, is too seldom perceived by the generality of persons, because they are apt to consider, like Mrs. Ainslie—and it is a dangerous plan of morality—the regulation of external conduct as the chief object of religion, and if they act their part with decency, maintain a fair character and do not injure any one grossly, they conceive their duty to be fulfilled. But it is from the heart, out of which are "the issues of life," there rise the great springs of human conduct, whence the main currents flow of our virtue or our vice, of our happiness or our misery. Nature had given Mrs.

Ainslie a good disposition, but too much prosperity had injured her. Contented in the enjoyment of the "beggarly elements" of this world, to which she was in bondage, she had forgotten God, and lost sight of the Supreme Giver in the multitude of the gifts bestowed and the blessings which from childhood had been hers. But now, for the first time in her life, she felt the pangs of self-reproach. She believed that Margaret would die, blamed herself for the inconsiderate rashness which had occasioned this lamentable issue, and not only felt that she had been guilty in the sight of God of gross selfishness and neglect—always serious offences in the sight of Him who cannot behold sin without abhorrence—but was also sensible of a painful conviction that by her hasty accusation she had so deeply injured one to whom for her faithful services she was deeply indebted, that reparation could hardly be made, although forgiveness might be asked and granted. As she rode home in her elegant carriage, with coachman, horses and all the equipments necessary for the display of earthly splendour, the mental cogitations of the often-envied possessor of this seeming good were by no means desirable. She was unhappy, far beyond any unhappiness or discomfort she had ever known;

and yet to her the short space of time in which she accomplished the journey from the humble cottage of the Gordons to her luxurious home were moments fraught with importance—the greatest importance of which man can conceive—in which knowledge of self is granted, and by the "still small voice" God sends such warnings as now reminded this child of prosperity that she, too, was a sinner in the sight of God. And what a mercy for us that it is that by any means God condescends to open the eyes of our understanding so that we can see ourselves as we really are, and discern that in his sight no one is good!

It was a great comfort, on her return home, that she could tell all to Mrs. Preston, which she did with many tears. "Margaret is young," said her aunt; "her strength may rally, and she may recover. But whether she does or not, we know that God does all things well, and it is our duty to submit to his unerring will without a murmur."

"If she should not get well, I can never be happy again," said Mrs. Ainslie. "Only to think of those foolish flowers causing all this trouble! I am sure I never could have believed that anything so dreadful could have arisen from such a trifling thing. And to think of Gracie taking so much

notice and playing such a naughty trick." And she continued to lament the event of the party, which, instead of affording the triumph she expected, had brought only the sad consequence she was now deploring; and declared that if Margaret was to die it would be impossible for her ever to have a happy moment again.

"I am sure I sympathize in your present trouble," said Mrs. Preston, "but everything comes by God's permission—nothing befals us without his knowledge; and this trouble may have been sent in mercy, as a warning to withdraw from frivolous pursuits and recal your attention to objects of real importance. God often permits us to see and suffer from the consequences of our actions, in order to make us fearful of doing the slightest thing that is wrong. When we have once experienced, as you are now doing, all the evils that a hasty word or a selfish accusation may bring upon ourselves or others, we shall learn how carefully we ought to walk through life, avoiding, as the Bible says, even the appearance of evil."

"It is very difficult, Aunt Fanny, to find out what is right," said Mrs. Ainslie. "I am sure I had no wish to injure Margaret, and any one who saw what I did would have suspected her of having

taken the lost flowers. And, after all, only that the poor girl is so ill, my fault in making the paper flowers, which it seems is the cause of all this trouble, is a very little one."

"Yet, look at the consequences, Clara. Vanity, selfishness and neglect of duty are always serious offences in the sight of God, and these were all combined in that one little act. You may have acted in the same manner on other occasions, but as no serious consequences ensued, you gave no thought as to whether such emotions were or were not sinful, but you were equally guilty in the sight of Him who is of purer eyes than to behold sin without abhorrence, although no one may have known what was in your heart but yourself."

"Every one is selfish," said Mrs. Ainslie, "and you will find but few who do not neglect duty at times. And vanity—I never thought it was so very wicked to be a little vain; that is, Aunt Fanny, if you consider the wish to have my party in superior style was vanity or deceit."

"Every one, Clara," said Mrs. Preston, "is more or less naturally selfish and prone to daily besetments from sin, which, born in us, are original parts of the constitution of our nature, and we are sent into the world to conquer that nature, and by

the aid of grace in answer to prayer many are enabled to do so. You may think that love of the world, selfishness and vanity are trivial emotions, but nothing that introduces disorder into the heart ought to be accounted trivial, since it is the little sins which are the most dangerous, because, seemingly of no importance at first, they steal insensibly upon the heart. What was at first indulged in as innocent amusement may at last become a serious business, and, in the end, prove the burden of your life. The beginnings of these small faults of our nature are most treacherous; their growth is imperceptible, until they at length advance into emotions which, when their dominion is established, are likely to *pierce the heart with many sorrows.* What the wise king said of one of them holds true of all, '*That their beginning is as one that letteth out water.*' It at first issues from a small chink, which might have been easily stopped, but, being neglected, it is soon widened by the stream, until the bank is at last totally thrown down, and the flood is at liberty to deluge the whole plain."

Mrs. Ainslie could not find words to reply, and Mrs. Preston continued:

"Bear with me, Clara, while I say a few words more; not in the way of reproach—for your own

heart is busy enough with that now—but on account of the love I bear to you and yours. You see, in this affair, so seemingly trifling at first, the great effect your words and example have upon your children—immortal beings, committed by God to your care, to be brought up for him. Grace followed your example in wishing to impose on her young companions by having 'make-believes'—only another word for deception. To accomplish this she had to steal your flowers. She is indeed but a child, nevertheless she knew that she was doing wrong, or she would not have bribed her little brother with candy 'not to tell.' Some might regard it as a childish frolic, and laugh at the whole affair, but is it not a striking and serious commentary on the subject upon which we have been speaking? For only see to how many evils that one trifling but wrong act has led; and I hope that you will now see the infinite importance of subduing early what are called trifling faults—a little vanity, or a little selfishness, or a little hastiness of temper—in your children. If you can be convinced how much happier they would be by an education which would fit them for the service of God rather than that of the world, and train them accordingly, they would grow up in confirmed habits of goodness,

which, by the blessing of God, would never leave them, however they might be tempted in after life, but, taught by the rules of truth, on whom to depend, would constantly be kept in the right way."

Mrs. Ainslie felt that her aunt was right, and promised that she would think of all that she said, and practice upon it, but at the same time begged that she would go to see Margaret and assure herself that she wanted for nothing. "Anything I can send or do for the poor girl may be freely offered, for I cannot do too much." Mrs. Preston promised that she would see her on the following day, when she could judge better of her real condition, and then kissing her affectionately, left her, with a hope that the effects of the conversation might be lasting.

CHAPTER XXI.

"WHAT IS MY DUTY? CAN I FORGIVE?"

MRS. PRESTON was as good as her word, and in a day or two after the conversation recorded in our last chapter, she rode out to the cottage, where, much to her disappointment, she found Margaret more ill than she expected. Hoping that a knowledge of Mrs. Ainslie's visit and explanation of matters would benefit her, her friends had incautiously told her of it; and as it is said that joy is harder to bear than sorrow, when the pressure of her great grief was removed the excitement caused by the reaction which ensued on hearing the tidings was more than her weakened frame could bear. A slight relapse was the consequence, and at the time of Mrs. Preston's visit she was lying quiet, almost in a torpid state, from the effects of an opiate which it had been thought necessary to give. She, however, partially recognized Mrs. Preston, but the recollection seemed to be painful, for she asked, in a

frightened voice, who was there? was there any new trouble? and fell back on her pillow.

Mrs. Preston had no cheerful news to carry back with her, and therefore Mrs. Ainslie's uneasiness was rather increased than removed. A second visit, however, showed a rapid amendment, which continued for a few days, and then gave way to a languor which prevented the return of strength. The joy of knowing that her good name was cleared from all suspicion had at first proved better than medicine in restoring her to health; but, as she grew accustomed to the knowledge, the unwelcome consideration of the debt, the payment of which was not only delayed by this long sickness, but to it was added another burden—namely, the expense always unavoidable in sickness—was brooded over with a morbid apprehension, and, resting with a constant weight upon her heart, prevented the return of the strength now more needful than ever to meet the family wants. All seemed very dark; but trouble had long been familiar with her, and had taught her its own best lesson—that mind can in degree rule itself even as it does the body. And besides this, she had the faith which had been taught her in early childhood, and although in her weak state her morbid fancy painted the probability

of their having to give up their home, she recalled the providences of her past life, and trusted that He who had brought them through so many trials would not forsake them now. In this faith, too, she was encouraged by her mother, to whom she told her fears and who shared all her anxieties. Work had been scarce, and the want of employment told painfully on the family purse, but Alice had learned to trust implicitly and to recognize the good hand of God in every dispensation. Those three words, "God is love," were to her words full of meaning, and when Margaret would express, often with tears, her anxieties and fears for the future, she would say, "All will be right; we must not grieve, for God, who knows all things, also does all things well." And then when Margaret looked into her mother's face as she uttered those same words which she had often heard from her father, she would be reassured, for that face, pale and wasted, yet "calm as a summer sea," was a living comment on the truth of the promise, for it showed that to her had been vouchsafed that "peace which passeth all understanding," and is the Christian's privilege to enjoy.

But the debt must be paid. John Brown was by no means a rich man, and there are limits to for-

bearance. He had never mentioned the subject except when Margaret had paid the small instalments her wages allowed, and that did not lessen her sense of obligation. The Bible says, "Owe no man anything;" and now, with an increased burden of debt, caused by long sickness and want of employment, with a horror of being in debt which there was no prospect of paying, she resolved to tell her difficulties to her kind neighbour, and ask him whether it would not be best to sell the cottage and go to seek a living elsewhere.

"Not at all, not at all," said he; "stay where you are. Better days will come. I am not so poor but that I can afford to wait. You did not borrow this money for your own pleasure, but only accepted the loan I offered so that you could keep the home for your mother and the blind boy. It is an entirely different case from that of one who is ready to borrow money without prospect or intention of returning it. But I know that you and your mother are none of that kind, so just let the matter rest where it is; something will turn up, for the sky is not always dark, and God is always good."

"But, Uncle John, you may never get it back. I am by no means well, and might fall sick again. Mother is growing old and cannot work much, even

if she got sewing to do; and poor Robert—all they can do hardly keeps the wolf from the door. All depends on me, and if I should not get a good place, or if I should become disabled or get sick again, you might never be repaid."

"Yes, I should," said John Brown; "for I have read that even the giving of a cup of cold water to one of God's 'little ones' does not go unrewarded, and 'inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of these, ye have done it unto me.' I am ready to trust on this assurance, and am never afraid of losing anything I lend in this way. So keep a good heart; your mother shall never leave her home while I live."

This kind assurance soothed her somewhat, but still that debt was there, and she would never feel quite easy until it was paid, as well as the other expenses made during her long inability to work. A most distressing languor still oppressed her and made all thoughts of exertion painful. She was not one, however, to remain long idle when there was so much for her to do. The perception of the claims of definite duty came strongly before her, and rousing herself from the dreamy maze into which she had fallen, she resolved to face life in its sternest aspect, and go forth boldly once more

and seek employment in the service of others. She shrank, however, from undertaking the place of nursery-maid when she recalled her trials in Mrs. Ainslie's nursery. Her experience there made her reluctant to enter another household of strangers, but what else could she do? Her inclination still turned toward a school, but there was no place open for which she could apply; and it was with a feeling of sadness that she was obliged to determine on seeking a service, since there was no alternative. It was the only way by which the weight of the burden now resting on the family could be lightened, and she was the one whose duty it was to do it. Yet where was she to find such a place as she sought? Mrs. Ainslie, had, indeed, acknowledged her innocence, but when whispers to the injury of any one's character have once gone abroad, it is no easy matter to silence them, and her morbid fancy pictured the worst in reference to the lost flowers and other missing articles that could be imagined. Mrs. Ainslie would no doubt now give her a recommendation, but her native pride rebelled at the idea of asking a favour of her; and she had nearly made up her mind to serve with a farmer's wife who she had heard wanted help, although her work there would be of the roughest kind, rather

than go back to B——. Whether this feeling was or was not right is not for us to say; it was, however, a natural one, and Margaret, although good, was not perfect—grace had not yet entirely overcome nature.

She was scarcely yet able to undertake the rough work of farm-life, and so she waited day after day, making plan after plan, which after all came to nothing, until she had resolved to give a definite answer to the farmer's wife and begin the hard service on the following week. She would do her best to give satisfaction to her employers, doing each day's duty as it came, for, believing, as she did, that nothing earthly comes by chance, she was assured that "strength according to the day" would be given.

But there were other things in store for her. The heart of man deviseth his way, but his steps are directed by Him whose merciful and tender hand, kindly keeping "the next day's page safely folded down," bids the believer trust that the morrow shall be filled with mercy even as to-day. Her plan of going to the farmer's wife was suddenly altered and in the most unexpected manner. As she sat alone one afternoon, when her mother and Mary had gone abroad on some business, she was

startled by a visit from Mrs. Ainslie and her aunt. The meeting was an awkward one for both parties. The first usual salutation being over, a rather embarrassing silence succeeded, which was at last broken by Mrs. Preston.

"Margaret," said she, "you are surprised to see us here, but you will be more so when you hear that we have come to ask a favour. Mrs. Ainslie wishes, nay, is most anxious, that you should come and live in her family again. Louisa is ill; she has never fully recovered from the last summer's fever, and she is fretting continually for your return. My niece is sincerely sorry for the wrong you have suffered, and not only asks forgiveness, but is willing to make every reparation within her power."

"Yes, Margaret," said Mrs. Ainslie, "I could not have ventured to ask this favour did I not believe that you were all that your conduct while in my family bore witness to—a Christian—and on account of Louisa, who has never ceased begging for your return. I know how much you loved her, and that knowledge, Margaret, has brought me here."

Surprise prevented Margaret from immediately replying. What change had come over the rich

and haughty lady to come thus and ask pardon of a servant, one of a class whom she had hitherto regarded as belonging to a separate race? Had grace, that mighty agent which effects such wonderful changes in the hearts of men, been at work in that worldly heart, and awakening conscience to a recognition of new motives and new claims, such as constitute the Christian's rule of life? She, therefore, did not at once answer, for she had a battle to fight with herself. We have told our readers of her quick temper and naturally proud spirit, and what it cost her to subdue them; but perhaps never did the "law of sin" contend more fiercely with the "law of the mind" than at present. A feeling of triumph, by no means in accordance with the spirit inculcated by the Saviour, which teaches of forgiveness of injury and patient endurance of wrong, shot through her heart and prompted a haughty refusal to the request. But before the words—far better left unspoken—which were trembling on her lips could issue forth, the "still, small voice of conscience," that faithful delegate of an invisible Ruler, made itself heard. "Dost thou well to be angry?" it whispered, and the commotion in her mind was at once subdued. Instead of the sharp reply she was about to utter, she mildly

replied that she could not give an immediate answer, as there was another prospect in view, and her mother, without whose advice she never acted, must be consulted. With this conclusion they were obliged to be satisfied, and departed with the promise that word should be sent in a few days as to the decision.

Margaret's mind was now in a most unsettled state; she felt dissatisfied with herself, and longed for her mother's return, that she might tell her of all—Mrs. Ainslie's request and her own discomposure. Alice was much surprised, but she listened calmly, and made no other remark than to say:

"Who hath known the mind of the Lord? How great is his wisdom and knowledge; how unspeakable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out."

Mary and Robert protested violently against Margaret's accepting Mrs. Ainslie's offer; the former declaring that it would be better to submit to any privation than to demean herself by going back, and adding that she did not see how she could ever forgive her.

"It did seem at first as if I could not forgive; but now—" She was interrupted by a voice, which inquired:

"What is this offence that is too great to be forgiven? or who is the transgressor whose sin does not come within the compass of the 'seventy times seven?'"

It was Mr. Upton who spoke. He had overheard the last words as he was about to enter the room, and his presence was hailed almost as a providence at this particular time. The late occurrence was told him. Margaret confessed the scruples she had of accepting the offer of Mrs. Ainslie, because of some bitter feelings which still rankled in her heart. She feared that on that account she would perhaps not be able to do her duty properly. But Louisa—she loved Louisa, and she, Mrs. Preston had told her when Mrs. Ainslie was not near, was hopelessly ill.

"Oh, tell me, Mr. Upton, what is my duty? What ought I to do?"

"Follow the rule of Scripture, Margaret, no matter what it costs you, and leave the issue with God, for shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? I admit your grievance is a great one, and a hard one to get over. But to 'err is human, to forgive divine;' and if we practice on the Scripture rule, we will 'write injuries in sand,' from which they will soon be effaced. There is no one," he

continued, "who is not prone to err. Mrs. Ainslie's accusation was rash and inconsiderate, and she did not stop to think how great was the injury she was doing; but now, that she has seen her error, and, bowing her pride, has asked for forgiveness and offered every reparation in her power, will you, Margaret, a professing Christian, do less than a votary of the world and say, 'I cannot forgive?' There is no limit to Christian forbearance. 'Father, forgive them, they know not what they do!' was the language of the Saviour when he drank the bitter cup for those whom he came to save; and remember, too, that 'if ye forgive not men their trespasses,' the Scripture tells us 'neither will your heavenly Father forgive you.' And not only this," he added, "there is joy in forgiving, for we are also told that the angels in heaven rejoice over the repentant sinner. Do you say you *cannot* forgive? Remember what the apostle said when he spoke of his privations and afflictions: '*I can do all things through Christ* which strengtheneth me;' and if you will apply at the same source, you will receive the aid you need."

Margaret recalled the time when her father spoke the same words—a time when in her childish anger she declared that she would never forgive Kitty

Green—and from the sacred recollection they came with double force. Her better feelings returned, and she said,

"It is right; I will go back to Mrs. Ainslie if mother says so."

"I do say so, Margaret," replied Mrs. Gordon. "I waited because I wished you to decide from your own conviction of what is duty rather than from my opinion. I am always satisfied with a course which is based on Scripture rules. Yours is in this instance one of such, and will, I trust, be sanctified by that blessing which alone maketh rich and addeth no sorrow."

There was nothing more to be done but to ask the prayer for guidance in this renewed undertaking—far more difficult under the present circumstances than when nearly two years ago she had gone forth to test the untried future. Her heart was then cheered by hope—hope, the smiling comforter of the young—but was now weighed down with feelings of reluctance and apprehension. But where is the pang that cannot be soothed by prayer? The pastor's prayer was fervent and sincere. Their own supplications for aid and strength to pursue her new and difficult path in a proper spirit calmed down the turbulent emotions which pride and a sense

of wrong had aroused, and she prepared as calmly for the painful undertaking as if no storm of suffering had ever passed over her head. Nevertheless, when she found herself once more under Mrs. Ainslie's roof, a keen, sharp pang shot through her heart—a sting of many mingled feelings; affection for the gentle invalid, and vague, foreboding anxieties; dread that her duties should not be properly fulfilled; but above all, a doubt of how in the future she would be looked upon on account of the suspicion which had rested upon her, and of which the consequences had been serious, filled her with alarm. But there was no drawing back now; no leisure to analyze these feelings; she had entered on the rough path, and must go on.

All these unpleasant emotions were, however, at once removed by the welcome she received on entering the nursery, where everything looked just as when she first took her place there, except Louisa, who was more altered than she expected to find her. Wrapped in a large shawl, she was seated on her rocking-chair, as usual, near the window, looking listlessly out on the falling leaves, which the sharp autumn wind was driving about in many circling eddies; but when she saw Margaret she started up with the alacrity of one in perfect

health, and, throwing her arms around her, exclaimed:

"Oh, Maggie, how glad I am you have come! I shall get well now, when you are here to read to me and tell me things out of the Bible and such pretty stories, just as you used to do. You won't go away again—surely you will not?"

Grace and Philip were in their accustomed corner, playing with Jolly and Black Peter. The latter, notwithstanding his thieving propensity, had not been banished, but was still tolerated "because the children could not bear to part with him, he was such a favourite; and now they knew all his hiding-places so well they could recover anything he stole, and so his depredations did no harm." Most gratifying to her were their noisy demonstrations of joy at her return. Even little Juliet had not forgotten her; she ran to her at once, put up her rosy mouth for a kiss, and as soon as she was seated climbed up into her lap, where she resolutely maintained her seat as a thing of right. How could Margaret help feeling happy as she witnessed this testimony of affection from the children? The accomplishment of duty always brings its own reward, and the schoolmaster's daughter had it.

We need not weary our readers with a detail of the life she was now living at Mrs. Ainslie's, further than to say that her duties were much easier, for she had not now the sole task of attending to the children, as Susan, the girl who had taken her place, was still retained. It was her business to wait on Louisa and attend to the children's lessons. She might do some other light tasks if she pleased, but such burdens as she had formerly borne were now never imposed upon her, and every one appeared to have more regard for her comfort.

She was there but a little while until she saw that a great change had come over Mrs. Ainslie—a change caused by the many experiences of life's troubles within the last year, and of the inability of wealth to give exemption from them. That experience proved salutary. The sickness of the children had awakened an anxiety she had never known before. The mortifying remarks made on her expensive party, from which she had expected so much and gained so little, had reached her ears. The mistake she had made in regard to Margaret, which had awakened the deepest self-reproach, and now the declining health of Louisa, filled her heart with apprehension and sorrow. She knew nothing of the consolation which religion can give, and she

yielded herself up to a despondence that was telling painfully on her health.

She went out occasionally and received visitors, but there were no evening parties as before, and the rooms furnished with so much splendour, which, when filled with company and resounding with music and merriment, had been so gratifying to her love of show, now, solitary and deserted, presented a contrast of which she was painfully sensible. This was her first lesson of the changes of life, and it proved an efficient one. She could not bear to think that Louisa would die, although Dr. Harrison gave her little encouragement as to her recovery; and, as day after day passed without bringing any permanent amendment, she felt how insufficient was wealth to afford anything like real happiness. She possessed the means of gratifying every passing fancy, and she had used them for that purpose, but her riches and luxuries were powerless now; they could not restore her child to health, and she was now without comfort, for she knew nothing of the consolation that prayer brings, and which it is the privilege of all to seek.

Her gay friends noticed that she was changed, but said that she need not get so mopey because

Louisa was not well—she would be bright enough when winter was over; but finding that when Louisa for a time seemed better her seriousness did not abate, they ridiculed her and said she was turning Methodist. To such remarks she turned a deaf ear, and occupied herself with her children, spending much time in the nursery—a thing she had not done before.

Louisa, for a few weeks, did seem brighter and better; and when the welcome Christmas-time came, and the well-laden tree was lighted, and the parlour was once more filled with young and happy faces, and Christmas-gifts were given and received, she was able to go down stairs and mingle among them as formerly. But the amusements differed greatly from those of last year. They were of a soberer, quieter kind, and far more fitting for children than the display made at that gay time. The gentle invalid enjoyed the evening, and when it was over and she went up stairs, she said,

"Oh, Maggie! do you remember this time last year? I could not say my prayers, as I wanted to, my head was so full of the pretty dresses and dancing, in which I wished so much to join; and don't you remember how much I wanted to have diamonds? But I am glad now that I did not

learn to dance, and I have found out that there are things far better than diamonds."

The spring came, and its bland and beautiful influence, the brightness of its mornings and gay sunshine of mid-day, brought satisfaction to the heart of the invalid, but no improvement to her health. She was to be parted from those who so dearly loved her. The mandate from which there is no appeal had gone forth—the decree, to all human knowledge, absolute, irreversible, had been passed. God, perhaps in mercy to the parents, was about to take the beloved child from them; it might be in a few weeks, it might be in a few months, but the next Christmas would pass without the simple celebration of the last, for Louisa would not be among them.

We have said but little of Mr. Ainslie. He was, like many others, so wholly immersed in business that he took no time to think of anything else. He was proud of his family, and, possessed of great wealth, allowed them extreme gratification in everything that the world calls good. He was liberal and kind-hearted, and Louisa was his especial favourite. He had been uneasy about her, but could not think that she would die until once that he looked at her when she had fallen asleep,

and then he felt as if he would have sacrificed all his wealth to restore his child to health; but, earth-bound as he still was, he could not imagine that God, in the mercy which was leading her to death, was also leading her parents to heaven. In the intoxication of his earthly splendour he had taken no time to think, but now the misty memories of half-forgotten offences, the carelessness of his youth, the coldness and insensibility of his advancing age, all marked by positive offences, mingled into one mass; and then, in the presence of the dread monitor whose voice none may silence, he wished that he had cared less for earth and thought more of heaven.

The summer passed without improving Louisa's health, and the still-hoping parents looked forward to passing the next winter in the South, and were making suitable arrangements for the journey. The influence of a warm climate often accomplished wonderful changes in such cases, and nothing should be left untried. This, however, was not to be; she declined daily, and, knowing that she could not live, spoke freely to Margaret.

"Oh, Maggie," she often said, "how glad I am that you came back, for it is you who have taught me how to pray and how to love the Saviour, whom

I had never heard about until you told me. But do you think that I will die?"

Margaret, startled by such a solemn question, would at first be at a loss how to reply, but at length would find words:

"If it is God's will, dear Miss Louisa, that you should die, he will take you to heaven, where you will be happy, for you will live with him and the blessed Saviour and the holy angels. You need not be afraid if you lean upon the Saviour, for he conquered death and robbed him of his sting."

"I do not think, Maggie, I should, if you would all go with me. But why does God, who you say is so good, give me so much pain?"

"He sends you the pain because he sees best to do so and because he loves you so much. You will try and be patient. He will give you strength to bear it, and will watch over you and love you far more than any of us here can do; and if it is his will to call you away from us, you will be so happy, so very happy, you will never wish to return."

Sadly and wearily the days passed on until the summer faded into autumn, and the soft October sun came broadly down on the tall elms which

shaded the mansion, flushing into brighter tints the brown and yellow leaves which yet lingered on their fast-thinning branches, and, shining through the crimson maples, lighted up into coral-like brilliance their red berries; but no great change marked the progress of disease in Louisa.

Dr. Harrison did not flatter, but friends related wonderful recoveries, and the parents, with the delusion so natural in such cases, believed that removal to a warmer climate would, if it did not cure, at least retard the progress of disease; and so all was settled and arranged for a journey to the South. Thus they were deceiving themselves, as so many do, looking forward to months, while Mrs. Preston and Margaret could not hope for weeks. But neither of them had courage to endeavour to remove the deceitful hope cherished by Mrs. Ainslie, for they felt it was almost better than the despairing certainty which would have rendered her incapable of performing her labour of love to her dying child. Mrs. Preston knew every symptom of the insidious complaint, and watched from day to day, with a heavy heart, the progress of the disease, which, by trifling variations and imperceptible changes, too surely bore the mandate of approaching death.

We need not linger over the last hours of the dying, or paint the grief of the parents when they became convinced that hope could no longer be cherished. Gloom reigned over the household, where everything had fallen into the habits natural to anxiety and nursing. A dreary calmness brooded everywhere; silence fell like the shadow of death upon the empty halls and deserted parlours; laughter sank into a smile, and all duties were regulated by those who were required in the sick-room. Louisa sank very gradually, appearing each day to become more deeply sensible of her obligations to her Redeemer and more sweetly confident of his love and power. His grace supported her, and his promises and presence cheered her and gave her the victory in the final struggle.

Great was the grief of her parents when she was removed out of their sight for ever. It was a grief which needs no description, since so many have experienced the same. Yet the grief for the dead is one from which we do not seek to be divorced; we would rather cherish it than part from it. It is dearer than happiness, more precious than joy, since it is instinct with the hopes of immortality. The loss of this darling daughter seemed to be made a blessing to the mourning parents. Their lives

until now had been one continued stream of prosperity, and they had thought little of the great responsibilities which belong to life, and to which they were for the first time awakened by the blow of death. The warning was not given in vain. They began to recognize that it "was not all of life to live," and, instead of being lovers of the world only, by the blessing of God their affections became detached from earth and their hopes fixed on a better world, where there "shall be no sorrow, nor sighing, nor death."

Was Margaret's course of service in the Ainslie family now to be ended? She believed it was, and began to think of seeking another place. But this was not to be. Mrs. Ainslie, partially recovering from the apathy into which she had fallen, begged that she would not leave, but remain and take charge of the three younger children, as formerly.

"I cannot spare you now, Margaret," she said. "You will be a comfort to me, and for Louisa's sake you will not refuse."

The request, backed by such a plea, could not be refused, and she was not sorry that she had consented when she found how useful she was. The children had become a good deal spoiled whilst she had been away from them, and it cost her

no small trouble to bring them back into proper bounds.

A great change had come over Mrs. Ainslie; she had partly recovered her interest in every-day matters, but her nerves had been so much shaken that but little discernment was necessary to discover how much she was altered. She would give the necessary orders for the house arrangements as usual, but, this task over, she would sit silent and abstracted for hours, having apparently no power or inclination to move. Every noise startled and every exertion was a trouble to her; her days were gloomy and her nights disturbed, and her health, as the winter advanced toward spring, became so seriously affected that the worst consequences were apprehended. The only thing that seemed to rouse and comfort her was the conversation of Mrs. Preston, who came frequently; and when she was not present, sometimes talked to Margaret; one whom, a short time ago, she considered "only a servant," but now a comforter; for grief, like death, is a great leveller.

Change of scene and climate, Dr. Harrison said, was absolutely necessary; and accordingly arrangements were made for going abroad in the spring. The house was to be shut up; Grace to be placed

under the charge of Mrs. Bond, a friend of Mrs. Preston's, who was a person to whom they could safely confide Grace, whose mercurial temperament demanded a stricter rule than she could have at home. Mrs. Bond had long been an instructress of young girls, and her kindly and judicious discipline had procured for her a well-merited, deserved reputation. Philip and little Juliet were to go to Mrs. Preston's, and nothing else was thought of but that Margaret should go with them—an arrangement which would have been highly pleasing to her, but for an unexpected interruption which occurred within a short time before their departure.

The patrons of the school formerly taught by her father, finding Squire Green's burly relative altogether incompetent, had become tired of her and withdrew their patronage. Determined, too, not to submit any longer to the arbitrary rule imposed by their wealthy neighbour because the school-house stood on his ground and he had subscribed somewhat largely to the building, they had collected money and built a new and more commodious one for themselves, which, being completed about this time, the trustees offered the place of teacher to Margaret.

How providential it seemed!—how happy she

was! The very place she most, and had for so long, desired, and she acknowledged the goodness of God, who had sent her this, as she considered it, singular blessing! Much as they regretted the loss of her services, Mr. and Mrs. Ainslie could offer no objection; but how highly they had appreciated her services was evident at the time of their leave-taking. On the last evening of their remaining at home, Mr. Ainslie, after paying Margaret a liberal amount of wages, placed a small packet in her hand, and said:

"For dear Louisa's sake, Margaret; you have deserved it, and more too."

"Yes, Margaret," added Mrs. Ainslie, "you have been a blessing in my house; you have shown me the beauty of the Christian character, as exemplified in the patience, gentleness and forbearance you have shown ever since you came into my family; but, above all, the spirit of Christian forgiveness you exhibited when you consented to return to my service, after such a grievance as you suffered from me, first induced me to believe there was sincerity in the religion which you professed, and awakened me to perceptions of that to which I had heretofore been blind."

"Every one has a mission, Margaret, whether

he is rich or poor, servant or master," said Mrs. Preston, "and every one of those who do not diligently employ the one talent committed to their care are unworthy of being entrusted with more; for our Lord has said, 'for unto every one that hath shall be given, but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath.' Faithfulness with regard to present duties is a fair test of our qualification for a loftier station. You have faithfully fulfilled the mission which is the duty of every nursery-maid who can appreciate and is desirous to fulfil the great purpose of our existence, and I trust you will find the reward promised to those who seek to please God in all things, 'with good-will doing service as unto the Lord and not unto men,' when the reckoning day comes, and will show that the least service in this way has not been unnoticed nor the promise forgotten."

Margaret was now free; her task was done: she was no longer a servant; her walk in life was henceforth to be a different one, the duties of which were not less imperative. But she had profited by the discipline of trial experienced from childhood, and was prepared for the undertaking. She had taken the straightforward path in obedience to an

outward call, and it had led her through much trial to a peace which the world can neither give nor take away. She could not, in her Christian humility, see how important her sojourn in the Ainslie family had been, nor all that she had been permitted to do; nor how—"only a servant"—by working in the place which God had appointed for her, she had influenced those who in worldly rank were so far above her for their good; but she had a sense of great happiness resting upon her, and felt that in the sacrifice she had made in returning to Mrs. Ainslie's service she had nothing to regret.

Entering on the duties of the school with a willing heart and humble spirit, she was as useful as she had been in the rich man's family, and resuming her place in Sunday-school, encouraged by the unexpected issue of her early labours, she tried to exercise a missionary spirit and win souls to Christ by honest teaching.

How happy now was the schoolmaster's family! Their cup seemed to overflow with blessings; light had taken the place of darkness; and fearful of being dazzled by the deceitful ray of prosperity, they prayed to be kept humble. The bounty of Mrs. Ainslie had made them independent; the debt was paid, the cottage was their own, and a sum

placed in the bank was ready for any future emergency.

The patrons of the school were perfectly satisfied with her, and she was considered as being a permanent fixture, when, to their great surprise as well as her own, she received a most unexpected offer of a new situation. Mrs. Bond, the lady with whom Grace had been left during her mother's absence, was in want of an assistant teacher—one who could teach the common branches and take charge of the younger girls. She applied to Mrs. Preston to assist her in finding such a one as she wanted, and that lady at once recommended Margaret, and, as it was after Mrs. Ainslie's return, she also added her influence. The offer was made at once and readily accepted. It was an occupation more congenial to her taste than the teaching of rough farm-boys, but she had a higher motive in view than that of gratifying her own feelings. She was extremely grateful to her patrons for the kindness they had shown, and until this offer was made she had no thought of change, for her very humble views made her contented with any situation in which she found herself useful.

Dr. Harrison, who was much interested in the family, had in one of his visits examined Robert's

eyes, and gave it as his opinion that an operation might be performed and his sight restored. She knew that it had been a source of great regret to her father that their poverty prevented the undertaking, but now—and it proved a strong incentive—she had a small sum in bank, and in Mrs. Bond's employ her salary would far exceed that she received for teaching a country school; and with the same self-sacrificing spirit she had always exhibited, she determined to exercise the greatest economy and lay aside a sum sufficient for the purpose. That purpose, however, she kept concealed from every one except her mother, from whom she had never concealed anything, fearing that false hopes might be excited, and the quiet contentment with which her brother bore his great affliction might be disturbed. With great reluctance her patrons released her; with great regret she gave up her charge, but she felt that a higher duty was before her, a more responsible and perhaps toilsome work. But the path was opened in the providence of God, and she must not refuse it.

She entered upon her new life with great humility and earnest prayer, and, thus armed, could she fail of the mark she had proposed for herself? Mrs. Bond, a pious as well as accomplished woman,

was more than satisfied with her. The pupils loved and obeyed her. She carried the same missionary spirit that had characterized all her former efforts whilst in Mrs. Ainslie's employ into her labours there, and, as opportunity afforded, scattered the good seed with a liberal hand. Such efforts are never altogether unblessed. Many of those girls remembered her teachings in after life, when the trials and difficulties which all must meet came upon them. The good seed, which had long lain dormant in the heyday of youth and prosperity, then sprung up and yielded the promised increase, even to sixty or a hundred fold.

Thus blessing and being blessed, her days passed by in great peace. Perhaps her greatest trouble was that of being separated from her family. More than one had suggested that Mrs. Gordon should remove to C——, where Margaret might be with her, but she would not leave her cottage. She had quite as good a home as she wished; and as for new acquaintances or new friendships, she did not care to make them. She had her pastor, the Browns and one or two others for friends—friends who had comforted and upheld her in the days of adversity, and she could not break away from long-cherished associations.

Mr. and Mrs. Ainslie returned to their homes, the latter so greatly improved in health and spirits that a careless observer might have believed that Louisa's death had produced but a passing impression on her mind. A great change had come over both, for both had begun to see that in reality "there is but one thing needful;" and having discovered this, the riches and honours and pleasures which they had once believed to be the chief good had lost their value, for they had learned their insufficiency to secure happiness or defend from the stroke of sorrow. But would these impressions last? Would they return to the "weak, beggarly elements of the world," and resume their former bondage? We are glad to be able to say that they did not. When time, the great healer of all griefs, had gradually soothed the first bitterness of theirs, they once more became interested by the daily occupations of life, recognized fully the importance of the duties they owed to their surviving children, and calmness and even cheerfulness took the place of despondence and gloom; so that Mrs. Ainslie's gay friends had little doubt but that she would reappear in the gay circle, and, as heretofore, be foremost in the round of folly and fashion. They were, however, mistaken. The effects of their sorrow

were not less real because exhibited in action rather than in words. They were to be seen in a constant observance of family worship, in an increasing attention to the welfare of their children and servants —whom Mrs. Ainslie had learned to recognize as belonging to the same human family as herself—and in giving the money which had been formerly bestowed on the purchase of frivolous and unsatisfying pleasures, to further the cause of good wherever it was needed. Greatly was the change felt by every one within the reach of their influence. But to Grace it was a blessing beyond all price; for, instead of being spoiled as she had been on account of her great beauty, her failings were watched over and corrected, her better qualities cherished, and the true spirit of life kept constantly before her. She grew up into a lovely woman, and, educated according to gospel rules, was a blessing to her parents and beloved by all who knew her.

Thus was the death of Louisa sanctified, and thus it is, by means of sorest affliction, that God teaches, showing that this earth is but a land of shadows, and leading into a world of reality, where the substance of bliss shall be found instead of the image now pursued; where "truth is inseparably united with pleasure, and where, the mists which

hang over this preliminary state being dissipated, the perfect knowledge of good shall lead to the full enjoyment of it for ever."

The change effected by grace—wonderful and mysterious—was fully shown when, long after Louisa's death, she heard of Mrs. Bond's wish to engage Margaret—once her servant—as an assistant in a school like hers. She went to that lady and voluntarily offered a recommendation which was worded in the highest terms. When Margaret would have thanked her, she replied:

"You do not owe me any thanks; I am rather under obligations to you for the silent eloquence of your unobtrusive and consistent life whilst you were in my family, for it did much to lessen my prejudices against professors of religion, most of whom I deemed hypocrites; and your patience, forbearance, and, above all, the forgiving spirit you have shown in reference to the sad affair caused by my inconsiderate rashness, has proved to me that religion is genuine, and obedience to the rule of God's precepts the one great good."

CHAPTER XXII.

CONCLUSION.

AND here, dear reader, the tale we have told—if it had been told only with the view of following the affairs of the schoolmaster's daughter—might well end. Mrs. Gordon above want, happy and comfortably settled; Mary promising and dutiful, even if not quite as much so as Margaret; and Robert, who had so sufficiently recovered his sight that he could follow a trade, and thus was no longer a subject of anxiety to his mother, were often ready to say, "Then am I glad because of Thee, because thou hast given me rest and brought me to the haven where I would desire to be," and formed another exemplification of the truth of the scriptural saying, that "those who wait upon the Lord shall not want for any good thing."

Nor did they, the poor schoolmaster's family, want for lack of friends. Dr. Harrison, when a friend of his, a celebrated oculist, visited C——, asked him to examine poor Robert's eyes. The

decision was favourable, the operation successful, and the blind boy was able to rejoice in the light of day, and take his place as a useful member of the human family.

But, in bidding farewell to the schoolmaster's family, would not our readers like to know something of the other characters mingled up in the incidents of our simple story?

Mr. Upton, the devoted pastor, who seemed to know how to minister to the hearts, and reach to the hidden depths of each, remained among the humble people whom God had committed to his charge, labouring faithfully and unremittingly in the service of Him who had called him to the work. Never holding himself aloof from the homes and pursuits of his humble people, he was a specimen of what a pastor—one who follows closely in the footsteps of the blessed Saviour—ought to be. His salary was small; he could not fare sumptuously, but he felt that his cup of blessing was full to overflowing. To win souls to Christ by the faithful preaching of the Word, and teach them to follow him, to trust in him, to rejoice in being a partaker of his cross here in the hope of receiving the fullness of his joy hereafter, was the dearest object of his life; and in the holy effort he found, as

all who are faithful have done, that the path of right was the path of peace.

The Browns, that sympathetic, Christian family, who had so fully fulfilled the injunction inculcated in Holy Writ, "Bear ye one another's burden, and so fulfil the law of love," prospered in the degree deemed best by One who decrees all things in consummate wisdom. But if they never became as rich as Squire Green, they possessed that which was of far greater value—namely, "contentment, which, with godliness, is great gain," and the hope of an "inheritance incorruptible and undefiled"—an inheritance that fadeth not away, and which is reserved for those who walk by God's appointed rule and do his will in the way set forth in the gospel. But of the family of Squire Green, the rich man of that country community, what shall be said?

It seems a mistake to think that persons who act from false principles are necessarily punished in the course of this world's providence. This truth is exemplified every day. The Bible tells us it is not so, and the difficulties which perplexed the mind of Job will still, we may believe, prove an exercise of faith to the end of time. Squire Green was an emblem of selfish and unjust prosperity; his flocks

increased, his possessions extended; he added house to house and field to field, and cared not who he oppressed in his insatiable desire of acquiring wealth. But the increase of riches did not bring happiness. His wife died, and when Kitty, who had grown up unprincipled and devoted to fashion and folly, was at the head of the household, the old man experienced a great change. She filled the house with company he did not like, pursued a course of extravagance altogether opposed to his wishes, and, refusing to listen to any remonstrances, the consequence was that they were involved in a succession of quarrels which destroyed the comfort of both. His sons, extravagant and indolent, were altogether unpromising, and took no pains to promote his happiness. Having no kind of domestic comfort, he clung more closely than ever to worldly matters, and threw his whole heart more and more into the acquisition of wealth, although he could not be blind to the prospect of his money being wasted when, unloving and unloved, he should have finished his desolate journey to the land where his riches could not follow him. With this sordid spirit came haunting fears and envy of others' happiness. He saw the Gordons prospering, and, being so near a neighbour, could do much to annoy them; but they

pitied him for his discomfort and trials at home, and instead of suffering themselves to be worried, learned to pray for rather than to be angry with him.

Martha Harding remained with Miss Marshall many years, and by a faithful, patient and affectionate performance of her duties, so fully won the regards of the invalid lady that at her death she left her a comfortable legacy, which, added to another bequest received by her mother—namely, the cottage where she lived—enabled her to remain at home, where, on account of Mrs. Harding's health, her presence was altogether necessary; and so, as one has said, as after a stormy morning there often comes a season of peace and sunshine and stillness, so in many instances do the trials and sorrows of early life lead to a happy old age. May it be so to all those who have struggled and do struggle often—as did these two poor girls whose history we have been tracing—with a weary and fainting heart! But the reward, though it seems long delayed, comes at last. The most helped of Providence is he who helps himself, but he who draws back from fear to face the stern demands of duty is not worthy to go through the ordeal, and is sure to fail; there is no storm so great that a true, courageous and loving

heart cannot live through, and, it may be, prove conqueror at last. There is no one so obscure as to be without some influence—that he cannot practice the virtues of self-denial, truth and benevolence; and such a character, although its possessor is "only a servant," can spread peace and happiness over a household. If a stone is thrown into the water, it will be seen how the circling ripples spread wider and wider; and so in human life does the influence of good conduct extend around, teaching at the same time more forcibly by example than by precept; and it is an influence no human being is too humble to exert. Margaret Gordon furnished an example not only of what energy and a sense of duty can accomplish, but of the influence which may be exerted by a good servant in the families where they are employed. She carried a missionary spirit into Mrs. Ainslie's nursery and family, and did much by her gentle and unobtrusive influence of Christian example, thus honouring Him whom she professed to serve, and promoting the interests of his kingdom.

Nothing speaks so loudly as the silent eloquence of a holy and consistent life, and a great deal of good might be done by those whose lot it is to serve in families, if they, as professing Christians,

were more anxious to *adorn* as well as to *profess* the doctrines of God their Saviour.

The situation of a servant was, as we have already tried to show, altogether distasteful to her, but she dignified her position—as it is in the power of every one to do—by taking it from the hand of God and using it as the means of promoting his glory; and proved the value of the religion she professed by a constant example of patience, forbearance and forgiveness of injury—in short, by the practice of those virtues, as enjoined by the great Apostle, found in the thirteenth chapter of 2 Corinthians. She had listened to and profited by the scriptural teaching of her pious father, and the discipline of her early life had, in accordance with those precepts, taught her "to commit her way unto the Lord and wait patiently for him." She had done so and found her reward. And there are many like her, although their names and works have not been recorded; for, while the deeds of conquerors are chronicled and the most trivial actions connected with their lives are thought worthy of remembrance, the quiet martyrdom and heroism of private life, for the most part remain unnoticed. And yet, to fulfil worthily the duties of the station which God in his great wisdom has allotted,

and pursue the domestic relations of life in a spirit of justice, love and charity, are in reality the noblest destinies to which any one need wish to aspire. It is little matter that the world does not register such deeds; its fashion passeth away, but the record of the just is in heaven, their witness is on high, and the promise of reward to such is steadfast and sure, "for their salvation is from the Lord." Is it not written in the holy Book, "Commit thy way unto the Lord and trust in him, for he will be thy strength in the time of trouble?" "Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God;" "Blessed are the meek; for they shall inherit the earth and delight themselves in the abundance of peace;" "Blessed are they that do his commandments," for, having walked in the appointed way and done all the will of God, they may look forward with calm confidence for the fulfilment of the promises of Him whose word is yea and AMEN.

THE END.

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